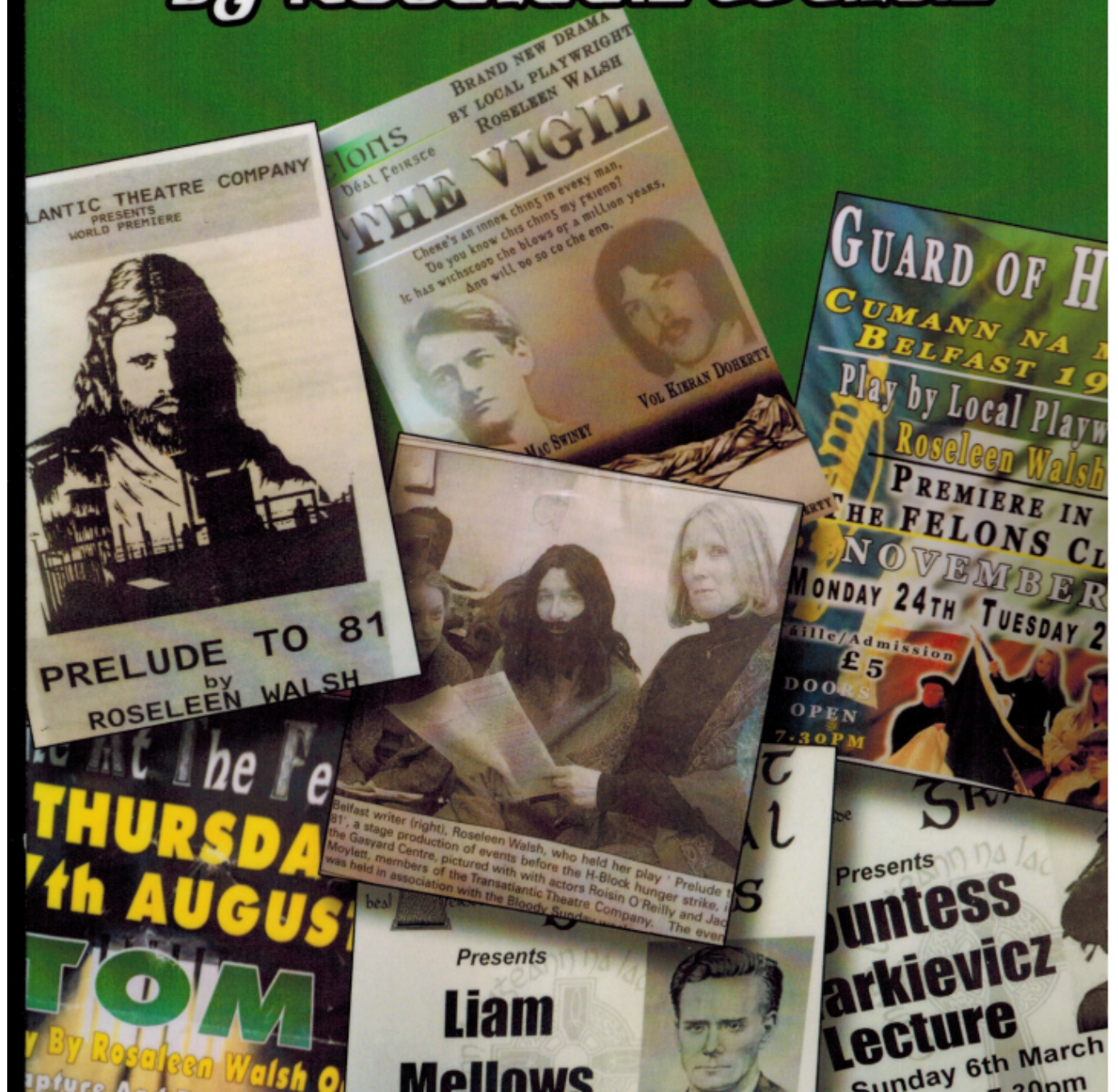


political drama

23 political dramas

By ROSELEEN WALSH



POLITICAL DRAMA

BY

WEST BELFAST PLAYWRIGHT

ROSELEEN WALSH

Twenty three political dramas ranging from the 1916 leaders to the cease-fire of 1994

Foreword

Roseleen Walsh is one of the finest writers writing for theatre in the English language to day. These plays are not only a joy to read but also to act. I know because I acted in a number of them. In these twenty three political plays she knows what she is writing about having served time in Armagh Jail for her political beliefs.

I was in the audience one night recently at a production of "My Son Parraigh" which was on in conjunction with a lecture on P.H. Pearse, when an announcement was made asking us if we minded if the play started 20 minutes late as some people had to come from the Waterfront Hall and they had rang to say they would be late. Nobody seemed to mind and about six or seven arrived in due course. It turned out that they were Loyalists who had been attending a Unionist function at the Waterfront which had overran slightly. Not only did they enjoy the production which was rapturously received by the packed house, they asked Roseleen would she write a play for them to go with a lecture on Lord Carson. I was standing beside her as she said yes. How times have changed. That play is not included here. Most of the plays here have been performed but Screw has not. This is an outstanding full length play which is a look at the other side of the political divide and certainly deserves a production.

Whether they are performed by professional actors, semi- pros, amateurs or beginners the productions I have seen always worked and were able to engage and transform us. This is it seems to me, because of the relevance of their subject matter, the ideas expressed and the eloquent simplicity of language, which is the hall mark of great theatre.

It amazes me that the recent movement for national liberation, did not throw up a theatre of the people, a political theatre. This of course is a repeat of

what had happened theatrically in Dublin in the early part of the last century, and by the time play killers like Blythe arrived on the scene there was no hope for real theatre.

Jack Moylett

Dublin

December 2011.

To Martin: my husband, friend and comrade

INTRODUCTION

When the cease-fire was announced (it had been anticipated so was no surprise) it felt strange hearing the I.R.A. statement and trying to take in the enormity of what it meant to me as an individual; it left me feeling numb. I was 19 years old when the troubles were given an official date for beginning; August '69, but the reality was that, minus the volume of violence, the troubles had begun 800 years previously when our next door neighbour's greed for what other countries had could not be contained and the Irish race suffered inhuman treatment from that country since. Though we had always fought back, the physical force of the British outfought ours but the strength of our spirit as a nation, a freedom loving people could never be outdone by any amount of British force and brutality! A quote from James Connolly springs to mind 'the great only appear great because we are on our knees'. Gradually we, the people from the 6 counties of Northern Ireland, began to get ourselves up off our knees and the rest, as they say, is history!

The horror of our revolution was the death and destruction it brought. Unfortunately, revolutions are caused, they are not the creation of the bored or unemployed as the propagandist would put forth as a reason for any uprising. So pre-revolution in these six counties was not a good place to be for anyone from the Catholic religion or and who was also a nationalist. Discrimination was so blatant that, most of the time, your name and/or school dictated your job prospects.

In the following thirteen dramas I have tried to say something meaningful about being 'ordinary' and have tried to articulate the things that have affected my life. All these things have had such an effect on my life that I feel compelled and driven to share them.

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The first drama 'CEASE-FIRE' was written in 1994 just after the cease-fire was announced by the I.R.A. The first three monologues in this drama are factually based while the other two acts may not be all that far-fetched.

Enjoy.

Roseleen

CEASE-FIRE

The cease fire has just been announced by the I.R.A. 31st August 1994. Three females are sitting on a settee to side of stage. The first to speak is around 40 years old, very pretty with black shoulder length hair. The scene begins in darkness; each female in turn moves across to single chair at centre of stage; then very slowly the light comes on as a guitar is played and a voice sings: Plaisir d' Amour (by Tedesco), the song made popular by Joan Baez during the 60's folk scene.

Plai sir d' amour

Ne du re qu'un mo ment

Cha grin d' amour du re

Tan te la vie.

She begins:

And now he's gone, 18 years. SEAN was skinny, tall, dark, scruffy and beautiful. I felt I knew the soul of the man, I recognised the quiet beauty that lay there within that soul waiting to be discovered. He was shy and easily embarrassed, not the type of person anyone would expect to find in the ranks of the I.R.A but life is strange like that (pause) isn't it? Really (pause) when you start to think about it. I suppose it would be like Catholics from West Belfast being omniscient for a day and seeing into the heart and home of the Reverend IAN and seeing that he is really a good and loving husband and father. Few people really know people who have an image or reputation in life, (pause) well I believe that anyway. I remember the first time I saw SEAN, it was like the song says, "your eyes kissed mine, I saw the love in them shine, you brought me heaven right then, (slight pause) when"..... it was love at first sight, he told me later. But I wasn't 'in love' with SEAN oh yeah (pause) I did love him I loved everything about him but I wasn't 'in love'. I loved his mind – his spirit – I think very one who knew him loved that intellectual brain of his, we mightn't have always understood what was in it at times – but we knew enough to know we loved it – (deep sighs)..... I only ever saw SEAN dressed up once – it was on a Thursday night..... all the do's in the Brair were always on a Thursday night....

1974 I think it was – the do was for the prisoners' welfare – for a mini-bus... how the families travelled in some of those old mini-buses I don't know; it was bad enough going in one once..... that was the week before he was released from internment that was how we met. MALACHY had shown him my photo and the next thing was he sent me a visit. I'd already heard a lot about SEAN from MAL'S letters. MAL loved him; they were like father and son. Anyway (pause) that Thursday night SEAN borrowed his brother's beige jacket (she laughs) it had those big massive lapels – no – now maybe it was brown – no – that's right it was beige, his shirt was brown – he looked really handsome – he was relaxed that night – I wore my midi – it was green with white flowers – (sighs) I wouldn't dream of wearing green now – it was the summer – I didn't wear a jacket. If there had been no troubles here – oh God – (sighs deeply) SEAN wanted to be a journalist – he would never have made it (slight laugh) he was too honest – too (sighs) always on the side of the underdog – those violated by politically motivated forces – paid for by

governments – no paper would have hired him – though I don't think he would have seen that as a real obstacle (laughs) no, that would have reinforced his belief that there was no such thing as the free press – he would have started his own newspaper (she smiles) I can see him now – jeans – army jacket (lifts her head and shakes her hair) long hair (pause she looks very sad) That picture in the paper – on one had ever seen that before – we all thought it was in the morgue – there was no other explanation – his eyes were closed – those beautiful eyes (thoughtfully) you know – I often wonder about when he died – when he was shot – I knew he was an atheist and I know he didn't die right away, – I was told he lay dying for about an hour or so (she lowers her head and puts her hand to her face wiping away a tear) I wonder – I don't think he had anyone to comfort him – he may even have been abused as he lay bleeding (she sobs) I often wonder – I wonder – did he call out to God – did he? Was there a compassionate – merciful God there with him in that pool of spirit filled blood, (holds her hands as in prayer) did he feel the need to ask for forgiveness? Or didn't it matter! Even CHRIST cried out as he bled to death, "father why have you forsaken me" perhaps the sound of MARY'S sobs gave some comfort to CHRIST– perhaps someone cried for SEAN..... perhaps. At the grave-side MAL – he spoke well – what he said about SEAN was true. And now – the cease fire!

The lights begin to dim and finally go out as she sings: (third verse of Plasir d'a mour)

And now he's gone
Like a dream that fades into dawn
But the words stay locked in my heartstrings
My love loved me.

LIGHTS OUT

LIGHTS ON slowly focusing on the second female who moves to chair on centre of stage. She is a woman in her late fifties and is dressed in black polo neck and trousers. In the background the song Hosanna sung by PLACDIO DOMINGO is being played. The song abruptly stops in mid air. She crosses her legs and clasps her hands over her knees. She stares at the audience and begins:

Ceasefire (she lifts her eyebrows in a sarcastic gesture) A bit late... A bit late for all of us – (deep sigh) I was one of JOHN’S greatest critics – in the beginning when he started the talks with ADAMS – JOE and SEAMUS felt the same – there was so much unrest from top to bottom in the party – then it was a bit like before GERRY went or “Lord FITT” as he is now – all the back biting – I’m really sorry and I have to say ashamed – we all know JOHN – we should have supported him when he needed us – but really I feel we all let him down – but – being the man he is – he’ll have put all that on the back burner and got on with today’s future! (long pause then she touches the nails of her right hand with her thumb) When PETER was arrested I got in touch with JOHN right away, he was very good – PETER’S my son – 19 years old and sentenced to life – maybe he’ll be home soon – who knows? – stranger things have happened – I nearly died when he was arrested – I hadn’t a clue – I suppose I was too busy with the party to notice – all the secrecy – I’d my own secrets – then – (she smiles and looks at her wedding ring then covers it quickly with her other hand) He tried to murder a british soldier – 23 years old the soldier was – he’s paralysed – crippled for life – and no one from here even remembers his name – though PETER will always remember – (she shakes her head) but only because he was the one who fired the gun – oh God (she says sighing) he’d been arrested from 10.30am that May morning – just after 10am. mass – and I didn’t know until 6.pm. that night – I’d been doing home visits that day – so no one could reach me – the house was wrecked when I got home – I just hadn’t the heart to clean it up for about 2 or 3 days later. I’d had a rotten day all together – I’d to assess wee JIMMY and MARY SMITH – and when I arrived – they lived in 13 or was it 31 – anyway – the hall was packed with neighbours and Dr LYONS – the young one – his father delivered PETER – that only seems like yesterday – well to cut a long story short – an I.R.A. girl had forced her way into wee JIMMY’S pretending to be me, she must have known they were waiting for some one from the dole office – anyway – she told them they had to keep a gun for the boys (sniggers) and not to tell anyone about it or they would be dealt with – poor MARY fainted – and small and all as JIMMY was God rest his soul – he grabbed her and her brief case and threw her out onto the middle of the road – she was one cheeky bitch – JIMMY told me later – the cheek of them – intimidating old

people like the SMITHS (her tone softens) that reminds me I must write to MARY – she took a heart attack 6 weeks ago in America, if it hadn't been for the Irish doctor MARY would have been dead – a young lady doctor – lovely red hair – and from Newry – KERRY, I think her name is – she and MARY have become friends – (she feels her nails again and looks as though she is inspecting them for some imperfection) so May 15 eight years ago – one disaster after another – PETER didn't even go to mass and yet he was arrested out of a confession box, there's irony there some where – he ran through the crowds coming out of mass – after shooting the soldier – and he hid – hid – in the confessional – it was my cousin's wife who told the soldiers where to find him. He was wearing a mask so she didn't know who he was – I don't think she would have told if she'd known it was my PETER – no one knew her identity except for me – in court she was referred to as witness 'B' I would never give her name to anyone – even family in case they'd tell it to someone and then God only knows what would happen to her – I know she thought she was doing what was right – but as I say – if he hadn't been wearing a mask I don't think she'd have told them – they probably would have found him any way! I'm not sorry PETER was caught – I – I – just can't come to terms with violence – I can't – well – maybe there is hope now – thank God it was ALBERT in power and not DICK or BRUTON – it would have been a non-starter with those two (pause) Peace – it sounds good – PETER never knew peace – (she takes a deep sigh) HOSSANA is played for about 30 seconds then the light goes out.

LIGHTS OUT:

LIGHTS ON slowly. The third female speaks. She looks around 30 years old with curly blond hair and wearing a track suit.

BEGINS (saying)

If never I should

See your face

Or

In your arms embrace

Your embrace

For want of joy

How could I be

Like the butterfly
Eternally free.

I wrote that the night he was sentenced. I sat all night and cried – ten – years – then – that was a life time –or so it seemed – I didn't know how I was going to get through one year let alone ten. And the kids – they were 3 and 4 at the time; thank God I had a good family. (pause) I'll never forget that first visit to the H Blocks, the protest had already been on for about 8 months when LIAM went in – the searches were bad – but that first day – what I'll never forget was the silence – when I say silence I mean the absence of laughter or even raised voices. Every so often in the middle of our half whispered conversation I would consciously listen for the silence, take a mental note of it with the intention of thinking about it later – maybe on the way home on the mini-bus or that night when I would be on my own and be able to go over everything LIAM had said every gesture, every look. I didn't understand it all then – the visit I mean – it took a while before the penny dropped. The screws were out to break the prisoners' and their families' spirits – that would be their little bit for Ulster – I was going to say for God and for Ulster – but somehow it doesn't sound right, (she takes a deep sigh then looks at the audience) it was like an unreal world – and that was only the visiting part of it (nods her head slowly) I was reminded of the visits one day years later – it was in a play by HAROLD PINTER called 'The mountain Language' (nods her head again slowly) that took me back to it all, I'd thought I could forget about those four and a half years – but when I watched that play and how it made me feel it all came back – part of me wants to forget it – but I can't – people who didn't experience those visits couldn't understand it – they mightn't even believe it – they were horrendous and then I realized HAROLD PINTER'S play wasn't directly about the H Blocks (she shakes her head) it was about people anywhere who were fighting to keep their national identity alive – because it was theirs – and theirs alone. It must be the same the world over where there's conflict about identity – I was never politically aware before the H Blocks not really – I mean I knew the obvious things like discrimination and the injustice but I didn't know just how deep these things run and the extent governments will go – to manipulate the minds of the general public through the media for example – their media; governments' media. (she takes a deep sigh and

stares at the audience for a few seconds) Me and the kids only saw him for 6 hours a year for four and a half years, each month I thought – this can't get any worse – but it always did. (pause) That time outside the visiting box – some fella said to me – “hi MAGGIE how's it going” I looked at him – there was something familiar – I didn't realize – I turned to LIAM and said – “God LIAM – look at him – what happened his eyes” LIAM put his arm around me and whispered – “MAGGIE, that's your brother TERRY – I didn't recognize him at first either – they held him down and scrubbed him with a deck scrubber” – (her body stiffens as she tries to control her emotions) The lumps in my throat and stomach were instant (she looks at the audience) I was afraid to move or open my mouth in case I screamed out loud (she looks as though she's about to cry) if I moved my hand I might have struck out at those (she can hardly say the word) Pigs in uniform – hatred personified!. As I sat in the prison mini-bus I was still holding myself together. I didn't know where to look to avoid eye contact with any of the other visitors. It wasn't until JOAN brought the kids home that I spoke – I didn't tell her what had happened or how I felt – I wore my usual mask – not taking it off until I was in bed – alone. (pause and looks at her wedding ring) Then says – there was only once I was really mad with LIAM – we almost didn't get married over it. It was one May morning – my best friend KERRY was staying the week – KERRY was from Newry and was at Queens studying medicine, well the gist of the story is KERRY called that morning at around 11am – we were in the kitchen having coffee – LIAM rushed in and asked KERRY if he could have a word with her, they went out into the hall then KERRY came back and said LIAM wanted her to do a message for him – she wouldn't say what it was – just that she'd see me later – I wasn't worried or anything – I knew KERRY was republican minded – but I didn't think she was involved to any large extent – anyway she came back around 5pm her face was almost as red as her hair – “Oh God MAGGIE”, she said “I honestly don't know whether to cry or laugh” – quick tell me I said what's wrong KERRY (she speaks slowly and clearly) what is wrong – then KERRY asked me to promise not to tell LIAM that she told me what had happened. “Here goes” she said – her hands were shaking. “Well that time this morning when LIAM wanted to speak to me he asked me if I would bring something to a house – KERRY stared at me with those big brown eyes – I felt really

angry at LIAM asking KERRY to take any sort of risk – he knew how much she wanted to become a doctor she had dreams and hopes – she hoped to go to Ethiopia to help – and now LIAM had asked her to risk everything I felt sick – then she continued well anyway he gave me a weapon – a 38 in fact – (she smiles) he gave me a G.L. on it – that’s the piece they use for the head jobs – I couldn’t believe how casual KERRY was describing a weapon that shot the life out of a person. She was studying to keep the life flowing and yet – at that point I realized I didn’t know all of KERRY – I realized I didn’t know all of LIAM either – well it turned out the weapon was put in a brief case and was to be brought to a safe house – however LIAM got the door number wrong instead of 31 he told her 13 and there to her surprise she was greeted with such friendliness – the old man who opened the door shook her hand and said “at last – we thought you weren’t coming – come in – I’ll put the kettle back on – there’s just me and the wife at home” as soon as she entered the living room MARY – that was the wife’s name – jumped up – shook KERRY’S hand and asked how many sugars she took in her tea – she thanked them and said “business first” the wee man said that suited them – he told KERRY they never drew any social security benefits before – that he’d always worked – she was a bit puzzled at that remark but continued to ask where they wanted her to put it – looking back she realized they’d thought she meant her brief case – so the man – JIMMY – told her to put it on the table. So clever KERRY thought that he had a secret hide-away in the house that he wasn’t prepared to reveal to anyone in case his house was raided – you know as in what you don’t know you can’t repeat. So now I can imagine what happens next, she sets the brief case on the table and opens it still wearing her gloves – the old couple expecting her to produce forms and a pen – she says to the old man “don’t touch it with your bare hands” – “sorry” – he said “touch what?” – she takes the gun out and turns to face them – explaining that it’s not loaded – then in a split second she notices the shocked look on each of their faces. The wee woman starts to scream first – the man then jumps up shouting – “we thought you were from the dole” KERRY very quickly put the gun back into the brief case and ran – tripping over a small stool on the floor – and muttering apologies she couldn’t remember how she got out the front door – then down the street a foot patrol was making its way up towards her – she walked into the first

house with an opened door – and told the people she was I.R.A. and she was going to sit until the army patrol passed. By coincidence the patrol stopped outside the house and stayed there for about 20 minutes. The family in the house as well as KERRY were in a bad way – they even said the rosary that the patrol wouldn't come in – as it turned out it was their pick up point – for the first time ever – they were delighted to hear the din of a Saracen's doors banging. Eventually when she got back to the call house and told what had happened it was discovered that the old man and his wife were pro-brit – their nephew had been nussed – pardon the expression – they said he was a tout – true or false I don't know – but anyway KERRY didn't do anything else for LIAM or anyone – thank God – she's a doctor now in New York – she is very prominent in the heart department. I'll have to answer her letter and tell her about the ceasefire. Ceasefire! (she shakes her head slowly)

LIGHTS OUT

SHORT BREAK OF 10 MINUTES:

ACT 2

The scene begins in a small bedroom. There is one man in the room he is tied to a chair. He is wearing black trousers and no shoes or socks. He has dark curly hair and is quiet handsome. He is sitting with his head down on his chest and also has a finger missing on his right hand. In the room there is a single bed and another chair, a writing desk with nothing on it, one window which is covered by the mattress from the bed. There is a wooden wall clock with a loud tick. The ticking of the clock is the only thing to be heard until the bedroom door opens and a tall thin clean shaven man of about 30 walks in. He has fair hair and has a hoop earring in his right ear; he is wearing jeans and a blue shirt. When he opens the door he stares at 'JACK' the man in the chair, for a few seconds – the ticking of the clock becomes louder and then suddenly stops as 'SEAMUS' stands in front of JACK, pulls up the other chair and begins:

SEAMUS You know the score JACK – I could say we're releasing you – but – you already know – don't you?

JACK Can I see a priest?

SEAMUS (nods his head from side to side) Sorry JACK you may make direct contact with the big fella himself – (pause) you can write BETTY a letter – if you want – (pause) I'll get you pen and paper – I'll untie you – but one false move and you're a goner (pause) here and now – if I don't get you there's three men down stairs who will.

JACK (sounding confused) O.K.thanks SEAMUS – will you be doing it yourself? (SEAMUS nods) You don't look like a SEAMUS – a PETE or ROBBIE – maybe! (SEAMUS nods again) how soon (pause) how much longer have I got?

SEAMUS We'll see! Get the letter done – but be quick-

(JACK LOWERS HIS HEAD. CLOCK TICKS LOUDER AS SEAMUS RETURNS WITH PEN AND PAPER AND PULLS JACKS CHAIR OVER TO DESK)

SEAMUS I have to read it over before I post it – O.K.?

(JACK nods his head)

JACK I don't know how to start

SEAMUS I'll be outside the door – and JACK there's some one out side so don't try the window job – it won't work.

(SEAMUS leaves the room – JACK puts his hand to his head and cries as the clock ticks loudly JACK wipes his face with the writing paper – he cries out loud)

JACK JESUS please – please – let this all be a bad dream (louder) I wish I'd never been born here – please – please – please – some one – (sobs) I wish it was over – I'm not afraid – I just want it to end – JESUS – what have I done?

(stops speaking and tries to compose himself – he looks at the audience and tells his story)

CONTINUES:

Even if they weren't going to do me – I think I'd do myself – I took money – that made it (lifts his head – his fingers parted) just what it was – blood money – I feel sick; I've felt sick from that night – how can I tell you BETTY – what I've done – I love you – oh God (wiping away tears) I love her – BETTY BETTY – if only you were here – to hold my broken body – to

comfort my broken mind –

(he begins to write and still talks to the audience)

31 August 1994 – My darling BETTY (he scribbles that out and writes)

Dearest BETTY – what can I say my love – (he stops for a short moment and the clock starts ticking loudly) I am a broken man – I pray to God that he sends you comfort – please BETTY try to remember only my love for you – I know you could have done better – but I'm glad it was me you chose – BETTY how can I begin to tell you the wrongs I've done – I'm ashamed – and believe me – I'd do anything – anything to undo all these wrongs. (he stops writing and tells the audience) I can't let her know how it all started – I've destroyed her life enough (he closes his eyes and pauses) I was having an affair (wipes his eyes) two nights before last Christmas (pause) we were stopped by the U.D.R. we'd no reason to be together – it was three weeks later to the hour when I was arrested – my mother was buried that day – thank God she's gone – she could never have taken this – I've broken enough hearts – (lowers his head and wipes his nose) I was very vulnerable – and they knew it – they didn't beat about the bush – they came straight to the point – work for them or they'd set me up – I should never have agreed. They went on and on and on – when they released me I (shakes his head) didn't even realize that I'd agreed to work for them – (he sobs to himself and folding his arms rocks himself from side to side, the clock is ticking louder and louder and then he says) it was BETTY'S birthday (closes his eyes) I'd been afraid to go out before that, in case I saw 'DAVE' or 'JOHN' that's what they told me to call them – anyway they made contact through the post, inviting me to a job interview in the Alanmor Hotel – I'm a chef by trade – that's how I lost my finger (holds his hand up) slicing ham – I haven't worked since I got the claim -£20,000 (he takes a deep sigh and looks up and murmurs over and over) oh BETTY, BETTY – please help me – pray for me please – I can't pray – it'll be over soon – I wish it was over now – I set JASON Mc GARRY up – he's dead because of me (loudly) why did I do it – (he rocks back and forward) the O'NEILL.S – they got life – because of me – (he puts his hand up to his mouth and covers it – the clock is ticking louder for about 20 seconds then he straightens himself up and says) I have to finish this letter. (he writes and talks out loud) BETTY I love you – please forgive me. Yours even in eternity JACK xo. (as the clock ticks louder he put

his head on top of the letter and covers his head with his hands, feet steps are heard running up the stairs and a voice is heard outside the room door)

SEAMUS I don't believe it – not now – not at this exact moment – for pity's sake it can't be true –

(feet heard running down the stairs and the room door opens and SEAMUS walks in with a gun in his hand)

JACK LIFTS HIS HEAD UP

JACK Is it time already?

(JACK and SEAMUS stare at one another clock is ticking loudly and faster than normal)

SEAMUS Get on your knees

JACK drops on the spot and joins his hands as if in prayer

JACK Oh my God I am heartily sorry for having offended thee (cries out)
Oh JESUS forgive me and help me – hold me – please – I don't want to die
please (sobs) please (in a low voice) give me another chance –
(He throws himself prostrated on the floor and whimpers)

CONTINUES:

BETTY – BETTY – BETTY –

(SEAMUS walks to him and stands at his side and cocks the gun he touches JACKS arm with his

foot and tries to roll him over – JACK doesn't move – he is locked in fear
then SEAMUS says in a low almost sympathetic voice as the clocks tick
fades until it can't be heard)

SEAMUS JACK – tell me why – man to man – why did you betray those
who trusted you – tell me – go on – man to man – how did you look them in
the eye knowing you were like JUDAS – breaking bread – sipping
something from the same cup – go on JACK – why – and how – tell me –
just man to man I need to understand it – (a few seconds pass until JACK
speaks)

JACK I'm weak – I didn't know I was weak – I broke – I'm weak – I don't
understand it – it was like the first time I took the money £50 – in the car
park – it was left on the wind screen – I took it and as I drove off the sweat

lashed from me I threw up – I was physically sick – I ripped it into pieces and threw it out the window (he sobs) McGARRY; I swear I didn't know (sobs) I – I – I didn't know he'd be there – at (pause) this point I just gave up – I knew I'd never escape them – they knew everything – everything – I was paid £100 for McGARRY I spent it on drink – I tried to come to terms with what I'd become over night – but I couldn't – I was weak – I was bought – oh JESUS – I sold my soul (crying) I can't go on I can't – (the clocks ticks loud)

SEAMUS (his tone is harsh) right JACK – you scumbag – you don't deserve this but here goes – (he puts the gun to JACKS' head and after a few second he pulls the trigger – and nothing happens – JACK lies still – SEAMUS stands over JACK with his legs wide apart – he puts the gun to his own head and pulls the trigger – and again nothing happens – then he looks down at JACK and says in an official tone) I have been instructed to inform you that as from this moment – the leadership of the Irish Republican Army – have called a ceasefire – which means you – my dear fellow – are the luckiest bastard alive – (the clocks tick begins to get lower as the lights fade completely)

LIGHTS OUT:

Scene 3

Scene begins with stage in darkness. Song being song in back ground on record *'Oh my darling Clementine' Light comes on slowly focused on middle of an oval shaped table. On the table are: cigarettes, matches, 4 large note pads, 4 pens, 4 pencils, 4 glasses on a tray and a bottle of spring water. As the light widens 3 men and 1 woman all dressed in pin striped suits (the woman is wearing a skirt) they are all seated around the table with the woman in the middle. There are 2 notices on the wall behind them; N.I.O. and No Smoking. There is also a small cupboard on the wall in which is kept 1 bottle of whiskey and 1 bottle of brandy.

MAN 1 (waving a sheet of green paper in the air) Well well – we've clinched it at last!

MEN 2&3 (loudly together) Here! Here!

WOMAN Not so fast boys – we can't be certain just yet – anyway (puts both hands in jacket pockets – tilts head slightly back)

Continues:

the thing is – yes – we’ve got them to lay down their arms – stop hostilities from 12 mid-night tonight – but that’s only one minute aspect of this whole plan of defeat. We want them all crawling on their bellies begging!

(Takes off her glasses and puts the arm of glasses in to her mouth looking at 3 men, turns slightly in chair and folds her legs removes glasses and places them on the table)

CONTINUES:

(Some slight coughs – some slight laughs) I think you get the picture gentlemen, any problem with anything I’ve just said then take it to Westminster! Fine then, our plan of action, which really outside of this room doesn’t exist. I hope I’ve made myself clear.

MAN 1 Crystal, CATHERINE, Crystal!

MAN 2 Couldn’t be any clearer.

MAN 3 Well –

WOMAN Well what?

MAN 3 This conversation isn’t happening, is it?

WOMAN You’ve been with us a long time HARPER; you must know by now that there are occasions – when things that to us alone – seem obvious and when stated out loud have seemed less than real, it is only in the aftermath of certain events that their relevance makes sense – do you quite get that?

MAN 3 Quite –

MAN 1 What are we talking here – (looking at WOMAN) sabotage? Or just plain sailing? (sighs) What ever – we need to map out our journey back to what we want and most of all to what’s good for the good people of Ulster.

MEN 1&2 Here here!

WOMAN Yes, (looking directly at MAN 3) you’re right, it’s not happening! And if you or anyone else thinks it is, then go now; but remember this room doesn’t exist! No one has ever been able to prove it does; even STALKER couldn’t find out anything about its existence –

MAN 1 (Slight laugh) Well he couldn't find out much about anything anyway could he –?

WOMAN You surprise me, how little you know, and I thought our small band knew everything about everyone – of course STALKER knew the lot but he couldn't prove any of it – how could he!

MAN 3 So, how do we go about doing what we're about to do, I mean, if these republicans are serious should we not be supporting them, think of the lives lost already, surely we don't want to see more of the same.

WOMAN Hardly the point, the point is they have to pay –

MAN 3 Don't you think we've all paid – paid enough – for the past – the little thing of 50 years of one party rule – are we saying that that was right or fair –

WOMAN I think this is a bad dream that's about to begin – maybe we should call it a night and resume in the morning – we're all tired – stressed – and I have to say – I will not tolerate garbage such as I've just heard, from anyone – especially in this room. JOHN – have you no ambitions at all – are you really past it – I've heard rumours – you need a break – somewhere abroad I think! You and Brooke should go well together – strangers to occasions!

MEN 1&2 Here here!

MAN 3 Here here all you like, you'll not bully me any longer, I've watched you all down through the years, and sometimes I've felt we were losing sight of what is important to the union, to our children and all those we love and care about – look at you all sitting here scheming and trying to destroy, well – I'll not be a party to any of it from now on, up until today 3515 lives were lost needlessly – yes – needlessly – and will you take responsibility for one more – because I won't –

WOMAN Pull back now or you'll regret this later when you sober up –

MAN 3 I may be drunk – but it's not with alcohol – it's with reality – the truth of us sitting here plotting – I don't want another hang-over I want to know exactly what I'm responsible for – and to whom.....

WOMAN Sorry gentlemen about this, someone's having a bad hair day – we'll just ignore him – I just want to remind you all that I have a life too and I

have people I care about – friends who will still have to be looking over their shoulder every time they step outside, and under their cars before their children get in – so there mister MBE high and mighty – put that in your snuff box and sniff it!

MAN 3 I'm not inclined to sniff – and if I were it most certainly wouldn't be snuff that I'd be sniffing!

MAN 2 Bravo bravo, well said Fred – look can we cut to the chase – and let MADAM brief us on what our role is post cease-fire – (looking at WOMAN) CATHERINE is such a lovely name I think you should permit us to call you by it more often, it softens the blow – though all in the name of equality (smiles and blows his nose with a very large white handkerchief) I mean in having a female boss that is.

WOMAN Precisely JENKINS!

MAN 3 Look – chaps – I have to get this off my chest and then I'm for home – not Rome – but home, (clears his throat) CATHERINE, you said at the beginning of this – what ever it is – meeting or think tank – and I agree, we've got them to lay down their arms, got them to stop hostilities – from mid-night tonight – and I believe they're serious, in which case we have to play ball. We at all costs must open the way – the path way – and keep it clear – then and only then will the violence be over for good. No muddy waters or anything, we must give them a clear undeterred passage straight to real peace – whatever their peace is – and I presume – in fact I'm more than certain they've thought this whole process through. They're not stupid – but answer me this if you can, and it is this – Do we want peace? Will we aid peace if it is to come? Or will we be putting whatever this peace is into jeopardy to get them to crawl on their bellies in order to satisfy a vengeful lust for supremacy – before any of you cut in answer me the one question I need answered – and that is: how will we get republicans and their supporters to decommission their ideals – I don't agree with their ideals – I don't even think they have any in my opinion but the whole point of the matter is that they think they have! And dear fellows that's what counts – or will count tomorrow. They can't all be mad or deluded and determined as well – yes determined to win the prize they believe they fought for all these years – tell me – tell me if you can – am I deluded? I'm frightened – that we

in this department will act in a way that won't allow peace to progress – develop – become a living aspiration in the hearts of all the people of Northern Ireland – (pause) there I've said my piece – now I'm going home!

WOMAN On your way out could you send in SMYTH! (Door bangs closed)
Now men, as I was saying – not an inch and every word will be measured and its meaning taken to task – the first of which will be the word permanent.

Oh My Darling Clementine is played/sung and then fades out.
Ends.

* Oh My Darling Clementine. Song which cost Peter Brooke, as secretary of State for Northern Ireland, any support he may have had within Unionism. He sang the song on RTE'S Late Late Show on a day when 7 Protestants were killed in an I.R.A. bombing.

Prelude to '81 was written mainly from my own experience as a prisoner (with political status) in 1973-74 in Armagh Jail. My husband, brother, cousin and many friends were imprisoned in the H Blocks and Armagh before, during and after the hunger strikes of '80 and '81. The characters of Liam and Roísín are fictitious but would bear a resemblance to many prisoners of that time. The brutality of the screws in the drama is based on actual facts.

prelude to '81

Two characters – 1 male – 1 female both in separate cells. Male is sitting on a mattress on floor and wearing only blanket. Female is sitting on bed and is wearing jeans and loose t-shirt, she has long hair tied back in pony tail. Light shines on prisoner when she/he speaks, other-wise they are in shadow or black out. The male prisoner talks out loud as if his partner KATE can hear him each night at a pre-arranged time that they both have agreed upon (a lovers' thing). At other times he reads from letters that he's writing to her. The female prisoner speaks directly to the audience.

MALE (light goes on in H.Block cell – prisoner is smiling – he recites poem he has just finished writing to 'KATE' the girl he loves)

If I could wander with the night

And be myself unseen

I'd travel to your place of sleep

And dream with you your dream.

But I can't travel with the night

Nor, be myself unseen

I can only in my sleep

Dream alone our dream!

What will I call it – 'To KATE' mmm 'To KATHLEEN' (pause) 'To Love' – (slight laugh) I know – 'Imprisoned Lovers' – you'll like that KATE – we're both prisoners – we're all prisoners – fenced in by years of bigotry – by years of second class citizenship – what else could we have been – but prisoners – we were never free – even our names made us prisoners- remember that night we went to see 'One flew over the cuckoo's nest' – it was in the 'Avenue' picture house in Royal Avenue – remember – we rushed out as soon as it was over and that skin head with the tattoos on his neck and in his ears heard you call me LIAM – remember – him and his gang got out in front of us – I ended up in the Royal* – 4 stitches and you in hysterics – if it hadn't been for LARRY and DANNY coming on the scene they probably would have kicked me to death and all because my name wasn't BILLY*;(slight pause) of course that wasn't the first time my name got me into trouble – just before we met – I was just about 17 at the time – my first job (laughs) and my last – the foreman was called LONG – JONNY – JONNY LONG, there's bastards called LONG every where I go – I wonder if he was related to DON? It's a possibility – they both resemble one another – manners especially – and most importantly neither of them can say LIAM – they both can only say BILLY – when LONG – the foreman called me BILLY at first I didn't tipple – and then when I did – I just didn't answer – Sín é – I seemed to be the only taig* (laughs) which was why I left – well not exactly – I left when the other men walked out early from the tea hut – I got the distinct impression that the U.V.F. were about to pay me a visit – in a sense – foreman LONG'S brand of sectarianism and bigotry did me a favour – I decided after that to go back to college and get some decent qualifications – and do something to change things here – KATE (pause and smiles) this was all your idea – you beautiful – beautiful genius – I love you – I hope you're keeping to your part of the promise – now if we meet like this each night at 10pm we can talk – talk about whatever lovers talk about – talk with silence – silence that we both understand –(slight pause) silence is beautiful

– when words are inadequate silence speaks volumes; now I'm just going to sit here and listen to you talk to me – what ever you say – just know that I love you – I love the ground you walk upon – talk my love – talk and let me hear your truth (slight Pause) my nakedness is my truth – let your love travel on to mine – let it rest – let it embrace my nakedness – let it see my nakedness for what it is and not what my enemies would like it to be. It strips me of nothing; it sets me free; there are no lies that cloths or uniform can disguise upon my naked body. I am free; let us taste this freedom together – now. (music – light goes out)

Light on in Armagh cell but only on female prisoner's face and body – the rest of the cell is in darkness – she begins):

FEMALE Bastards – I told them I needed the light on to write the letter, (mimics the screws voice) 'you'd plenty of time during the day to do that – you should have done it then – don't whinge about it now'. Bitch – give someone a bunch of keys and a uniform and they think they're God – yes I know – I could have done the monthly letter earlier – but I have a mind – I can still think – and decide when I want to do something for myself – I may be locked up 23 hours a day – but my mind still works – I can still decide for myself when I want to write the one letter I'm permitted to write a month – if they dictate what time I write my letter – then they'll be dictating what day I write it and who I write it to. Bastards – they'll not break me. Of course they'll censor the letter and black out what their petty little minds disagree with. (smiles) Last month's letter to DEIRDRE was blacked out except for 'Hi' and 'bye for now' – (sarcastically) 'little amuses the innocent' (loudly) so what's their excuse? (suddenly another voice is heard)

V/O 1 Someone shot dead in the New Lodge. The news said he had a rifle – (then another voice is heard)

V/O 2 TERESA – are you all right – there's nothing we can do – we'll know more in the morning.

FEMALE (closes her eyes) Oh Jesus – please don't let it be TERESA'S brother – please LIGHTS OUT:

LIGHTS ON: In H block cell: (someone is shouting to let everyone know latest news)

V/O 3 A volunteer shot dead by Fusiliers in New Lodge – just over an hour ago – he opened up on foot patrol. That's all I know for now; 'boys' – any

ideas. (voice dies out)

MALE (Shoutsback) CHRIST – who could it be? – I hope it's not – no – no it couldn't be – (pause – lifts his hands and joins them and holds them to his mouth as though he's praying – then says softly)

KATE I wish I was there with you – in your arms – I can smell your perfume – that fragrance (takes a deep breath in slowly as though he's smelling it) you wore it that last night before I was lifted – remember – I said it would always remind me of you (laughs) yes I know – that very big old woman at the next table was wearing it too – but it was you the smell suited – exquisite – unique – fascinating – endearing – absolutely overwhelmingly wonderful – and so so full of wonder – magic – see how much I adore you! I can feel your soft hands – your heart and mine thumping – waiting to explode – your hair long and shining – covering your breasts as you stand before me – waiting – as I wait. You said in that last smuggled letter that you were thinking of getting it cut – please KATE don't; please. Just on that letter – KATE – JOHN in the next cell asks if you have a friend who would write to him – he hasn't had a visit in nearly 2 years, his girl got fed-up and blew – someone nice – he's a quiet bloke, a Derry wan – his ma's S.D.L.P. she sent a priest up to try and talk him off the protest – but there's no way – he's gone through too much to stop now – he's very close to FRANCIS HUGHES and all the South Derry men (short pause) he was shot in the side when he was arrested – they dumped him in the back of a Saracen and because he was losing so much blood they thought he'd die – they waited before bringing him to hospital – so after an hour or so some brit spotted his arm move – but they had already reached the hospital and could do nothing about it – they had to bring him inside – and, as it turned out, in the nick of time – much to the disappointment of the brits! So he was in bad shape when he arrived in the Crum – (pause) I wonder what you're thinking now – about us – about all the babies we're going to make together!.

V/O 3 Hey LARRY what time's the story tonight – it better be a good one – the prisoner better get away this time! FINBAR – you never told us you used to be an altar boy – (laughter and then LIGHTS OUT)

(Armagh: LIGHTS ON)

FEMALE I wonder who it is? – I hope it's no one I know – TERESA'S brother is in the New Lodge unit; she worries a lot about him – we'll know soon – if I

hear the keys rattle and footsteps walking up the class – feet echoing as they try to go softly not to disturb the night hour – (nods her head and pauses) that sense of suppressed energy waiting to be unleashed with the turning of keys in a door – then cries that chill every heart on the wing – and the relief that it's not your cell door being opened in the middle of the night and yet (brief pause) wanting to share some of that sting – pain – so great is the bond among those who suffer as a people – a community – we Irish republican p.o.w's! (pause) This place was opened in 1780 – all the suffering these cells have seen- all the silent cries – the desperation – the complete and utter misery – the misery from here will echo long after the place closes – that is if it ever does close. (pause) There was talk among the screws of it closing and a new 'state of the art' prison being built to replace it – who knows – who cares! (pause) I have this awful dread that there's more suffering in store – these screws are just itching to provoke us everyday –MAÍREAD is strong – she has a great insight into their politics of repression – she doesn't let them away with a thing – MAÍREAD'S destined for great things – you can sense something different about her – there's like an aura about MAÍREAD; she draws people to her side – and everybody feels secure with her no matter what – we all feel a sense of loyalty towards her (pause, stands on bed and looks out through the bars at the sky) it was hard for her being the first to be sentenced after political status was removed – she was on the same operation with SEAN MC DERMOTT when he was shot dead – she could have been shot dead herself (slight pause) it was a devastating blow to the 1st battalion losing SEAN and MAÍREAD and then shortly afterwards KIERAN DOHERTY in another operation – he's doing 23 years in the blocks – I think he was part of their unit – I saw KIERAN with MAÍREAD a few times – MAÍREAD'S very security conscious – she'd never mention who she knew from outside – I feel safe with MAÍREAD – she always knows exactly what to do for the best – (pause) I think she's in love – when she gets a smuggled letter she's – sort of radiant – radiant – among all this shit – but that's the way she is – 'special' (another voice is heard after a short pause- LIGHTS OUT)

V/O 1 MARY – happy birthday – (then all voices sing – happy birthday song – then 3 cheers – and MARY replies)

V/O 2 Thank you dear friends and comrades – and anyone else who's there

(another cheer goes up) now please go to sleep – I appreciate what you're trying to do – sweet dreams mo chara. (back to cell as LIGHTS ON) –
FEMALE Happy birthday – I was arrested two days before my 18th – I spent my birthday in Castlereagh- I got a busted eardrum and a lump of my scalp pulled out and rubbed round my face as I lay on the floor of the interrogation room – by two big female– stroke – male RUC special branch bastards – I was physically sick – I had to clean my own vomit up – and was then told I had beat myself up in a state of rage – banging my left ear so hard against the wall – that I burst my inner ear and knocked myself unconscious! – I wish Sinn Féin would shake itself up and start to do something about all this torture – we depend on people like ANNE MURRAY from the 'A.L.J.' (ASSOCIATION OF LEGAL JUSTICE) – to advise us and to compile all the brutalities the prisoners suffer. (pause) BOBBY SANDS calls it 'the conveyor belt' system. I'll write to BOBBY tomorrow and see what he thinks of my latest endeavour – (smiles as she jumps down off bed and walks up and down cell) He'll understand it's really to everyone who thinks that they can beat and strangle the spirit out of us – our determination in this fight frightens them so much that they think by locking us up and treating us so badly that we'll give up and change – and be happy that they've let us live in our own country, as the second class citizens they want us to be! Well I know BOBBY will give me his honest opinion of it – (speaking even softer) must tell him I loved 'A Place to Rest' I've promised to read it later to all the girls – we put on shows too – you know! Here goes (clears her throat)
So you think you can change me
re-arrange me
my beliefs
steal my mind
take my time
lock me in this cell
you fool –
you forget
I have a mind
strong and fine
one united with my flesh
you'll never change me – re-arrange me

my beliefs
steal my mind.

And, all you've taken; is my time!

(pause) It's not good enough for them to take only our time – they want more than that – I know time is precious – who wants to spend all their time fighting a war – I don't – I want to be out living and enjoying myself – but I can't live in a society that treats me and everyone else I know like second-class misfits – and so the fight goes on – my part in this conflict didn't end as the gates here closed behind me – the screws really are doing their bit for little old 'Ulster' – most of them never spoke to a Catholic – never mind a republican before in their lives – (pause) they wouldn't be able to get away with treating us the way they do if it wasn't sanctioned by their political masters – the N.I.O. The screws are only pawns; and they can't even see it. We'll die in our prison cells rather than conform to their criminalization policy – we are political prisoners of war sín e! (pause)– Each day that we survive in here is a victory – (pause smiles – puts her hands at back of her head and relaxes) now it's my time to reflect and to prepare for tomorrow's victory!
LIGHTS OUT:

LIGHTS ON IN H BLOCK CELL:

MALE Kate – I was thinking about LAURENCE last night – I must remember to ask you how his family are keeping; the Ardoyne men talk about him and FRANKIE a lot – they were all devastated (pause) – it was an icy morning – I remember that and waking up and thinking how good it was to smell the freshness from outside – and to watch the birds dig about in the snow for food – we were all freezing but it was still good to experience a change – from my window it all looked so surreal – magic! And JACKIE, DINNY and JIM (pause) all unarmed – they're dead over a year now – 117 bullets – I think the brits will intensify their 'shoot to kill' policy, don't you? The way things are at this moment in time it looks like this war could go on for another 20 years – the screws are really working hard for the brits in here – when I say the brits KATE you know I mean the brit establishment – don't you – they're trying everything to break us – it would suit them if none of us took visits at all – the mirror searches are a complete night-mare – if we take a visit then we're almost certain to get one – of course we don't co-operate so the dirty bastards force us – it makes me feel sick to know that they enjoy

it – anything that humiliates us they enjoy – I’m sure it goes with the job description – if they don’t think it’s morally right they should refuse to do it – but there’s no chance of that – they really believe that they’re doing it for ‘Ulster’ poor bastards – if this place closed tomorrow – who would give a damn about them – not the N.I.O. anyway – most of them are motivated by greed and bigotry – so they can’t see things as they really are – they can’t see that in fact they are the real prisoners. Bye the way (pause – looks at his fingers and bites his nails) just in case I forget – I have to say this now – KATE – you know how I loved the ‘Eagles’ well could you write me out the words of ‘peaceful easy feelin’ it’s just JOHN and myself have a slight disagreement about the lines – he says (starts singing) ‘I get this feeling I may know you – as a lover and a friend – but this voice keeps whispering in my other ear that I may never see you again’ – but I say it goes – ‘I get this feeling I may know you – as a lover and a friend – but this voice keeps whispering in my outer ear that I may never see you again’! Now write it all out for me – I love the song – it reminds me of that week-end in Donegal – remember we had that beach to ourselves. Two lads just up from the Crum were saying your man ‘HUMPHERY – Who – ATKINS’ is a weakling – MAGGIE’S puppet – the only impressive thing about him – the boys were saying – depending on your taste of course – is his suits! I believe MAGGIE almost had the pleasure of shaking hands with HARRIET KELLY from Ballymurphy. HARRIET deserves a medal for tackling her – imagine – MAGGIE’S booed everywhere she goes in England and she comes here to be cheered by Protestant women – it’s incredible – supporting someone who, at the end of the day, doesn’t give a damn about you – who took your country and stripped you of your identity – and culture – and brain washed you with a few jobs – and so you feel grateful – that makes me sick! (pause) KATE I never thought of asking you this before – it may sound sort of crazy but – do you pray – I mean – how do you pray – on your knees – in bed – or how? – don’t be shy – I want to know everything about you. I love you so much – you keep me going in here – if I didn’t have your love it would be hard going – I know you don’t share my politics – well I know you didn’t but I think you understand more now about how it really is here – I don’t just mean the H blocks – I mean all our country – Ireland – and these 6 counties in particular! (the rattle of mugs is heard, banging on doors, heavy footsteps,

keys being rattled, door opened in next cell and prisoners shouting) – prisoner closes his eyes – noises – someone being beaten up – furniture being pulled across floor, screws laughing, LIAM puts his hands up to his face covering his eyes and prays nervously) Oh JESUS – I don't want to hear this – Please JESUS – don't let JIMMY feel a thing – help him keep himself together – JESUS – (screaming is heard coming from next cell – cries out loud) JESUS – where are you – where the fuck are you ?– (all prisoners start to bang on doors – noise ends abruptly – there is a long silence – then another prisoner shouts)

V/O 3 JIMMY'S gone – we saw them drag him by the hair along the wing – he seemed conscious – there were too many of them – about 10 – he was beaten – he couldn't get a dig in – Long was the main screw –Bastards – 27th October – JIMMY'S birthday (clock starts to tick loudly in back ground – light goes dim and stays on male prisoner – at same time light shines on female prisoner – clock continues to tick loudly)

FEMALE Early morning – and I still can't sleep – another sleepless night – the smell still bothers me – all my body waste wiped around these four walls – I understand now that my body really is a temple – it hosts – sort of like a 'caretaker' all the precious, priceless gifts – that my world – my whole – complete world holds – I'm not just a shell – I'm a whole person, a complete person, a work of art designed by a master craftsman – (pause – and looks as though she's checking her finger nails) to those with no eyes – like the screws here – I'm a piece of shit – stuck to the floor – that they can trample on and then wipe off as they leave the cell – pretending I don't exist – fooling themselves that I have no right to exist – that they are so – so very normal and sane – they only seem sane to one another because their uniform unites them – their brand of sanity brutalizes the weak – it attempts to strangle the spirit of those who are incarcerated here and are united by truth – (pause) if it weren't for the truth – I wouldn't be able to go on – I wouldn't be able to survive this – and yet I have this dreaded feeling – or maybe it's a premonition – that it's going to get worse – (pause and puts her head down) but how can it possibly get any worse – we're locked up 24 hours a day – only one visit a month – and to get it I have to strip naked – and let them bastards look at me – only one letter in and out each month – we can't wash – we can't get out to go to the toilet – my cell walls are

covered with my own excrement – the floor is soaking with my own urine – we're not allowed books to read – no television – no radio – I haven't heard music in 3 years – JESUS! How can it get any worse! (she lifts her head and sings the *'Galtymore mountains'): 'On the Galtymore mountains not far far away, I'll tell you a story that happened one day, of a young Irish Coleen who's age was 16 and she hoisted her banner white orange and green. Now a young British soldier was passing that way, he spied the young maiden her colours so gay – he laughed and he jeered and got off his machine determined to capture the flag of Sinn Fein. No you can't have my banner the young maiden cried – either you're blood or mine in this green valley will lie, for I am a rebel it's plain to be seen and I'll lay down my life for the flag of Sinn Fein. The young British soldier turned white as the snow, he got on his machine and away he did go – for there's no use in fighting a maid of 16 – who'd lay down her life for white orange and green'. . (the light dims and goes to the H block cell where the prisoner has a letter in his hand – it's written on cigarette papers)

MALE Letter from PAT: I take it every one else on the wing has read it since this is the last cell – passing messages along the pipes is the only way – but now it means I've to eat it after reading it – it must be serious – PAT wouldn't write otherwise – it must be something he can't shout out; O.K. mo chara, (he reads over the letter then just at the end he smiles puts it into his mouth and eats it then talks to audience) PAT wants a consensus of opinion on what else we can do to intensify the protest – we've all to put forward our ideas; there is only one other thing we can do, and that's to go on hunger strike – it's on everyone's mind – our writing campaign is still very successful – inside and outside – the relatives have all formed into groups – Relatives Action Committees – R.A.C. for short – they've been everywhere in the world protesting and wearing the blanket – to show at least what it's like – it's hard for people from other countries to understand – they need to see something visual – or read something graphic to get a more comprehensive picture – of what way we're being treated – we are political prisoners and all we want is to be treated now the same as we were treated prior to March '76- (pause) if we let ourselves be treated like criminals then we will be accepting that our 800 years of struggle against the British was not political – that it was 800 hundred years of crime – (pause) support from our own

people has been great – we can't give in to the brits – for their sake as much as ours – I think soon we'll have to go on hunger strike – I don't know how that'll be worked out strategically – I can't see us all going on it together – though I don't know – I suppose it's something you'd have to volunteer for – something you'd have to go through with – but then we're all human – and I'm just sitting here thinking about it all – I pray to God it won't ever come to that! (pause) but there doesn't seem to be any other way, (pause) the war is continuing in here – it didn't stop for any of us when these gates closed behind us – all the injustices – the second class citizenship – the orange bigotry – orange domination – the British and Orange control of the six counties; nothing has changed for any of us – we all knew what we were doing when we joined the I.R.A. I don't have any regrets – I'm sorry if my actions caused pain to any one – but if a state or country treats a particular section of people under its jurisdiction with: indifference, injustice, and openly gives its blessing to its sectarian police force to keep those people down – then – what does it expect when those same people get up from their knees and get organized to fight back – what can they expect – they still treat us like combatants – they know the war's not over – it's here – in the H Blocks – why else would they try to force us to accept criminal status – (pause) when KIERAN NUGENT refused to wear the 'uniform' he told them if they wanted him to wear it that they would have to nail it on to him – JESUS – where else in the world would you find a man like that – KIERAN NUGENT didn't know what was going to happen to him after that first day – he walked into hell – and he's survived – he was followed by NED FLYNN and then there was a steady flow of men after that – they both could have been out by now if they'd conformed – and sure CHRIST would never have been crucified either if he'd conformed – the brits really don't get it – they think everyone's like themselves! (suddenly more banging on doors – a lot of noise like furniture being broken and yelling – lights dim and clock is ticking even louder in back-ground)

(Some time later – prisoner is sitting with head shaved – if possible water running down walls – prisoners have been forcibly scrubbed with deck scrubbers and cells have been washed with power hoses – clock is still ticking loudly)

JESUS – is this hell – is this the inferno Dante wrote about in his poem?

(pause – he covers his eyes with his hands) my eyes are burning – I couldn't see for – for – I can't even remember – I can't allow myself to let go – I'll have to let it go before I go insane – (loudly) Insane – Insane – is this sanity ? – the smiles on their faces – I tried to avoid their eyes – (pause) for the first time ever – usually I try to make eye contact – even through the plastic cover over their faces I could see their grins – I could hear JOHN moan as he came to – 'KATE' (pause) I wish I was out of here – away in some far off place – (pause) we didn't recognize the sound of the water hoses being dragged along the corridor – this was the last cell they hit – in a way that was worse because I could hear them in every other cell – some of the bastards laughed the whole time – 'KATE' (deep sigh) they were like kids having a water fight – it was so funny to them – we were like frightened birds – curling up to protect ourselves. The force of the water as it shot out and assaulted our naked bodies blew us to the other side of the cell – I thought my stomach was going to open up and my guts fall to the floor – I'm aching from head to toe – they sat on me and held me down – and they shaved my head – without mercy! Two bastards held JOHN down and two others scrubbed him with deck scrubbers – he struggled till the end – I heard everything – it was as if it was happening in this cell – and then it all happened again – only I got to watch it – I was the star of the show – it was like it was a film on T.V. that I was watching – (pause puts his head down) – my flesh's raw – sore – it's painful to move at all – the blanket is just sticking to my back – I don't know which is worse – the cold or the pain. (pause) They beat and scrubbed us till our skin peeled off our bodies – (closes his eyes) but our spirit is intact – undamaged – they can see it – they saw it as we resisted the bastards as they held us down – but they can't touch it – they can't even get close enough to understand it – they just don't have a clue, (clock is ticking loudly – and very fast) I heard BOBBY SANDS say 'Our revenge will be in our children's laughter' – I didn't understand that at first – but now I know exactly what he was saying – I know what he means – 'KATE' I keep asking myself if hell could be any worse than this place – (thunder and a loud voice speaking only in Irish is heard by audience – but not by prisoner)

V/O Is beannaithe na boicht ó sprid, mar is leo ríocht na bhFlaitheas.
(blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven) Is

beannaithe lucht na trócaire, mar déanFar brócaire orthu. (blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy) Is beannaithe lucht Fulaingthe gear leanúna ar son an chirt, mar is leo ríocht na bhFlaitheas. (blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven) Is beannaithe an lucht a mbíonn okras agus tart orthu ar son an chirt, mar ghedshaídh said sásamh. (blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied)

(after a pause of about 30 seconds LIAM then begins to pray – very loud and angry) Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for what is right, – and no greater love hath any man than he who would lay down his life for his friend, (says softly) for his comrade! (as he ends thunder is heard and lightning flashes in the cell – light goes out and moves to Armagh cell where prisoner is reciting BOBBY SAND'S poem)

FEMALE (shouting out) Right girls – are you all ready – here goes *'A Place to Rest' by BOBBY SANDS (clears her throat)

'As the day crawls out – another night crawls in
time neither moves nor dies – it's the time of day
when the lark sings – the black of night – when the curlew cries
there's rain on the wind – the tears of spirits – the clink of key on iron is near
A shuttling train passes by on rail – there's more than God for man to fear.
Toward where the evening crow would fly – my thoughts lie – and like ships
in the night
they blindly sail blown by a thought – that breaks the heart of 40 women in
Armagh Jail

Oh – and I wish I were with the gentle folk – around a hearthened fire
where the fairies dance unseen – away from the black devils of H block hell
who torture my heart and hunt my dream –

I would gladly rest where the whin bush grow – beneath the rocks where the
linnets sing

in Carnmoney graveyard neath its hill – fearing not what the day may bring.'
How I wish I were by a turf fire now – the smell (she takes a deep breath in
and smiles) I wonder what you're doing now BOBBY – maybe you're writing
– I look forward to reading your poetry – why do you call yourself

'MARCELLA' – who is 'MARCELLA' is she a real person or someone you've read about? (pause and looks very thoughtful) In my next letter to BOBBY I must tell him how much we have in common. My family, like his, lived in a mixed estate; we'd Protestant neighbours – friends I grew up with, we did everything together, went to dances, the pictures, dates, of course not schools or churches, we never really talked about religion, it was one of those things that you just knew by instinct not to mention. I remember SYLVIA SMYTH – we were best friends until she brought me up the Shankill to meet her granny – when she told the granny my name the granny went out to the kitchen and called SYLVIA out, we left almost immediately, and then later SYLVIA told me not to call to her house anymore because her uncle MERYVN didn't like Catholics – he lived with the granny and had gone to SYLVIA'S mum – his sister, and told her she wasn't allowed to have a taig in the house – he was in the Orange Order – I didn't understand that at the time, SYLVIA cried as she was telling me this – she said it wasn't her fault – and I, not knowing any better, accepted all this. Then '69 came and we were the first to be targeted and burned out in our street. It was hard for all the family to get over that, it was people we thought were our friends that did the burning, we ran for our lives; the RUC were out in force – my mother pleaded with them for help – they stood there as if they didn't see her – I suppose we were lucky to get out with our lives, my da didn't go back to work either – he worked in the Village – he was a cutter in one of the clothing factories – they were beaten by orange mobs every day as they left the factory – the mobs stood about the Donegal road waiting – of course some of the Protestant workers had already pointed out the Catholics to them – so into the real world – 'Ulster' style we went! There were hundreds of homeless families in the schools where we took shelter – we were weeks getting one of the chalets built for the refugees – refugees – it's so strange to be called a refugee – you feel helpless and I suppose at the mercy of those in authority! Our whole family changed after that – then when the brits came – and things like the Falls curfew – internment – torture – bloody Sunday – shoot-to-kill – (MAURA MEEHAN and her sister DORTHY MAGUIRE were both shot in the back for sounding a horn to warn people that the brits were raiding in the lower Falls) – and now the H Blocks and here. We have to keep going no matter what the cost – I think everyone

here is of the same opinion that if things get any worse then we'll have to go on hunger strike, nobody wants that – but it seems a very real possibility from where we all are! (pause) God made us all equal (loudly) and no Unionist government nor British prime minister is going to continue to treat us directly or through the system as any thing less than equal – we're not criminals – we are political prisoners – (suddenly thunder is heard and lightning flashes in the cell the jingle of keys is heard and loud foot-steps – and muffled voices – a cell door is heard opening – and then a female voice cries – lights out – then light goes on in H.block cell)

MALE Oh dear God – give us strength – help us to get through this – (says slowly) this is hell – (pause – smiles –someone is tapping from the next cell – about one foot from the ground is a pipe which runs through each cell – the prisoner moves over and put his head down – he pulls out a piece of cement from the side of wall at pipe and pulls a string through with a small package wrapped up with cling film at the end of it – moves back to mattress and begins to open package – inside is some cigarette papers, tobacco and two single matches – he carefully makes up a cigarette – goes over to the door and strikes the first match – which goes out – then he attempts to strike the second match as the cell door bangs and a screw shouts in)

SCREW Well well BILLY boy – just thought I'd let you know you've got a letter from KATE – she doesn't want to see you again – she's got someone else – she says you were lousy in bed – a flop – (laughing) now she's got someone who knows what he's doing – she says you're gay – ha ha – by the way the letter was delivered to H3 by mistake – so they all know about your little predicament, you'll get it tomorrow – the letter I mean, night night BILLY boy! (screw is heard walking down class banging on each door with bayonet and whistling *‘ we are the BILLY boys’)

MALE Bastard – fuckin bastard – KATE would never write a letter like that – no – I know she wouldn't – that's another weapon they use – when they can't get us any other way – they say personal things like that – scum merchants! (he gets up again and moves over to the door and bends down and strikes the second match – it lights this time – he lights the cig and moves back over to the mattress and sits down and smokes – he keeps his eyes closed for most of the time – pause) MICHAEL GAUGHAN and FRANK STAGG (pause keeps his eyes closed) JESUS – I can't begin to

imagine how hard it was for them – I don't know much about their lives – I don't know what kind of men they were – what books they read – what their hobbies were – things like that but I do know how they died. Their deaths must have been agony – sheer agony – at least and it's a big big at least – here, there's over 300 of us – over there, they were on their own. (pause) I don't call myself a Catholic any more – but since this H block experience I feel I've got to know JESUS CHRIST a lot better – I think I understand where he was at – I've been stripped of everything – even my dignity – so there is no more pretence – I am who I am – (smiles) what you see is what you get – I wonder when MICHAEL GAUGHAN and FRANK were lying on their death beds, did they feel alone – I know they had loving families but they had no comrades – to talk to – talk things over with – we all have this inner need to know that we're understood – it's great when we're loved and needed and all that but we still need to be understood – and in a way I wonder if their lonely cells – their isolation – was it in some sense like – the garden of Gethsemane — it's crazy sometimes in here the way your mind works – JOHN'S very quiet tonight – I'll get down later when I don't feel so sore and talk to him – we have our 'change the world' conversations about this time each night – but maybe later – it may be another long day tomorrow! (clock is ticking loudly) Another battle like today! The screws can only win if we let them. They're out to break us – mad MAGGIE'S given them the green light – they can do whatever they think it takes to break us – even our families are degraded when they come up – the searches they've to go through – then the visits themselves – we have to whisper everything that matters – the screws are stopping visits if they can't hear what we're talking about – and then what each prisoner has to go through to get the visit – and our families know this so it makes it even harder for them to come up, because, afterwards – they go home and worry until they hear from us – (pause) they'll never break us – they couldn't break MICHAEL GAUGHAN – or FRANK STAGG – (nods his head from side to side) they'll not break us. (light goes out and banging on door is heard – though the audience can't see anyone they hear what sounds like 7-8 screws go into cell and drag the prisoner out – there is screaming and shouting – then a silence as the light goes on and on the mattress is the blanket the prisoner was wearing – then his voice is heard from his punishment cell) 'KATE' I

don't know if it's that time of night when me and you are sitting together – I've no idea if it's day or night – I've just come to – I must have been out of it for I don't even know for how long – 8 of the bastards came into the cell last night – they said for a cell search – they lifted me by the ankles – usually it would be by the hair but as the bastards pulled most of it out yesterday – they lifted me by the ankles instead – they booted me – my stomach in particular – (pause) I tried to hold on to the frame of the door-way as I was being dragged out naked – the blanket was the first thing they went for – 'KATE' I was sore before – but now I'm numb – my mouth's swollen – my nose feels as if it's not attached to my face – I'm lying here on the bare floor – CHRIST – 'KATE' hold me – come here to me now – 'KATE' 'KATE' I'm human – if you kick me hard enough I feel the pain – JESUS – I'm not going to pretend it doesn't hurt – but I'm never going to let it beat me – I'd rather die now than submit to their attempts to criminalize us – we are political prisoners. (there is an echo to his voice – the words 'we are political prisoners' sound as though they're shouted through a loud speaker – play ends in darkness and then the sound of birds singing and for about half a minute children laughing) END:

*LIAM is the Irish for BILLY. Many Protestant bosses and workers would refer to their Catholic co workers who were called LIAM as BILLY, they refused to say a person's name in Irish if they knew the English term for it.

*taig is a derogatory word used to describe a Catholic from the North of Ireland by Protestants/loyalists from N.Ireland

*The Galtymore Mountains is a rebel song about an I.R.A. man named THOMAS ASHE.

*A Place of Rest by Bobby Sands. I was given permission to use this poem by The Bobby Sands Trust at the time of writing this play.

*We are the Billy Boys. A derogatory 'orange/loyalist' song about the Pope and all things Catholic usually sung to show the supremacy of Ulster loyalists.

SCREW

I wrote this play in 2000. It's 1 hour and 30 minutes in length. A 3 act stage play about sectarianism (later adapted as a screen play). Don and Jean move to Belfast where Don works as a prison officer in H Blocks. He is an

English Catholic and she is the daughter of a Scottish bigot; Don doesn't think it important to tell work colleagues that he is a Catholic; they discover the truth when his mother dies and he discovers the truth about himself, that maybe he is also a bigot. The screen play has a happy ending with Don flying off to a new and perhaps wonderful life, while the stage play ends sadly with Don and Jean dying as they try to run away to begin their new life in Australia.

When my husband Martin had been in the H Blocks for 3 years he'd heard no music in all that time as the prisoners on protest weren't allowed radios or books, no television either: That Christmas a screw brought a record player into his wing for Christmas day and some records. The one L.P. he played was 'Pink Floyd' and of course he took a chance of being reported by his colleagues who may not have been so compassionate; he could even have lost his job. So it was this thought that inspired me to write this play: 'Any man/woman, who does not go out of their way to inflict suffering on the less fortunate in their keeping is a man/woman whose soul has not been bought and paid for'. Unfortunately, most of the screws in the H Blocks and Armagh enjoyed the power that their job 'the undoing of republican souls' had allowed them. They behaved with cruelty towards the prisoners for the duration of their imprisonment. But, to find one good man working in the H Blocks restores one's faith in human nature.

Screw

Scene 1 begins in a kitchen. It is furnished with a square table, red gingham table cloth and matching curtain; cooker, fridge and a few cupboards.

There are four men sitting around the table playing cards and a red haired woman in her twenties standing at the sink washing a few glasses, she is wearing jeans, a blue T shirt and a red gingham apron.

The mood is jovial and they all seem relaxed. The four men all work as prison officers in the H.Blocks of Long Kesh. The year is around late '79 and early '80 just before the first hunger strike. The prisoners have already been on the 'blanket and no-wash' protest for three and a half years. Don has been working in the H.Blocks for about a year; he and his wife Jean moved to N.Ireland to escape Jean's bigoted father Robbie who is a follower of pastor Jack Mass.

Characters:

JEAN (Scottish – 22/26 years old with long red hair)

DON (Jeans' husband – English)

JAMSEY (around 50 wears glasses)

BOW (Small with moustache)

BILL (Dark haired early to mid 20's)

The year is 1979/80-

Act 1

PHONE RINGS IN HALL. JEAN LOOKS AT HER WATCH, DRIES HANDS ON APRON, SAYS TO DON

JEAN That must be da, spot on time. (she hurries out to the hall to answer the phone and is heard saying) hello da is that you.

DON (without lifting his head says) wouldn't half know he is ex military – Highland Fusiliers – proud of it too.

BOW (throwing his cards onto the table) And why not?

DON Rings religiously at 2025hours every Friday night since we left. Now not 2030hours or 2020hours but 2025.

BILL DON this is Monday (throws two cards onto the table and lifts out one from the pack on the table)

DON Yes BILL – thank you for that piece of information (throws his cards onto the table) that's me out (gets up from the table goes over to the fridge opens the door and takes out a beer; he holds it up and asks) anyone want a beer, they're cool now.

ALL (slowly one by one) yes me.

JEAN ENTERS KITCHEN AS EVERYONE LOOKS UP AT HER

DON Everything alright?

JEAN Well (looking at DON) remember DON I was sayin that da was thinkin about going on the protest to the Vatican with pastor MASS – well he decided he was goin for definite but guess what DON? He fell and broke his leg the night before – he tripped over the protest banners he'd left in the hall

– he pulled the phone out as he fell – that’s why he didn’t ring us on Friday – he got the phone fixed today. God love ‘im and here’s me thinkin he was off in Rome chained to some railings outside the Vatican and gettin some stick from them Swiss guards that stand around wearin bloomers!

DON I hope he does JEAN – your dad only seems to love people who think the same as he does and thank God I haven’t met many of those. (JEAN stares at DON angrily) sorry love I shouldn’t be saying that – sorry – forgive me (laughs) all right go ahead, tell me they found out (laughing) that ROBBIE was the brains behind it and they wouldn’t let him on the plane.

JEAN I don’t like your English sarcasm – Mr Saint THOMAS MOORE; it wears a bit thin after a while

DON You don’t approve then Ms Orange Sash!

JEAN Definitely not Mr Fox Hunt!

BOW Now now you two love birds how long have you been married – and you’re like this already.

Don I’m only kidding JEAN (laughs) she knows that – don’t you sweet-heart.

JEAN Sometimes I don’t know I just don’t know. (folds her arms – stares sternly at DON until he looks away)

JAMSEY That would be the mix – the Celt and the Sassenach- (laughing) go on kiss and make up.

DON (loudly) No need – JEAN takes things too seriously – that’s all – (smiles and says sarcastically) I’m trying to change all that – aren’t I dear?

JEAN Oh shut up – of course I’m used to you by now (she walks over to DON and gives him a slight hug)

BOW JEAN, going back to what you were saying; is your da into all that?

JEAN All what – (she looks at BOW and pauses for a moment for him to answer) if you mean is he a Protestant and a proud one at that then the answer is yes (nods her head) of course he is – where do you think we come from anyway. We’re the same as you people – you’re the same as us we’ve the same problems in Scotland as ye all have here!

BOW Oh I know JEAN I just didn't think some of you took it as serious as we do over here.

JEAN Well BOW it just goes to show how little you know about the brethren in Scotland.

BOW Well JEAN then tell me this – why didn't you marry a good Ulster Protestant instead of an English one? (they all laugh as DON and JEAN look at one another and BOW winks his eye at JAMSEY)

JEAN Ach now I married a good man no matter where he comes from or what he believes in (JEAN and DON share a smile) look you people I'm away to have a shower and wash me hair. There's more beer under the sink – if you need them cooled put them in the fridge now.

JAMSEY See you later JEAN.

BILL None of those wee scones tonight JEAN?

JEAN That was definitely a one off BILL (she walks out the kitchen door and can be heard running up stairs)

BOW Lucky man DON she's a real nice girl or lass as they say in the highlands –

DON Now fellas lets get down to some serious business. (He begins to shuffle the deck of cards and then deals them out – they all study their hand putting cards on the table and replacing some from the deck)

BILL Eight of spades – this isn't my lucky night – or day for that matter.

BOW What's up BILL had a bad day or a really bad day – (pause) don't let those bastards in 5 get to you – especially that MORGAN – he's about the biggest bastard in the place – (slight pause) 3 of us got him last week on his way back from a visit – (smiles and nods his head)

DON I thought he didn't take visits (looks up from cards at BOW)

JAMSEY (looks over his glasses) That was his first after two years – they're up to something – I can smell it!

DON A break-out? (looking at his cards)

BOW (says loudly) You gotta be joking ESCAPE from H blocks – now DON you ought to have more sense – the blocks are THE most secure job in Europe.

DON Like the Titanic – (puts his cards on the table) I'm out.

JAMSEY Oh oh oh very funny – 3 aces – now who's a lucky boy then. (lays his cards on the table)

BILL (puts his cards on the table and says) That's me – I'm out – damned bloody day. (lifts his beer and drinks) nice and cool. I needed that after the day I've had.

JAMSEY Ach BILL it can't have been that bad – what happened anyway (slight laugh) it wasn't you're first time on the mirror search? Don't tell me – you enjoyed it! (chuckles to himself)

(BILL stares at JAMSEY and then DON and shakes his head in disgust)

BOW I'll tell you what – look BILL you let the bastards get to you, I told you before – put the boot in and walk away – it's as simple as that – what about you DON – is that right? What do you say.

DON Don't ask me it's just a job to me nothing else – from one set of criminals in Scotland to another set here.(shrugs his shoulders)

JAMSEY But that's where you're wrong DON terribly wrong – there is no comparison between these boys here in the blocks and you're ordinary everyday crim on the mainland (slight pause) Scotland included.

BOW And for your own sake DON don't ever express that sort of sentiment in the canteen like you did on Friday.

DON Why? – (slight pause) I thought – I mean – well the government they said the political status-

BOW F- political status – it was the worst thing the government ever did here – well at least they wised up in the end – I supposed that's somethin.

DON Why – does it make all that much of a difference to us?

JAMSEY It made a big difference – believe me – for starters we couldn't kick the shit out of them the way we can now – and that's just for starters DON

(DON and BILL share a short glance)

BOW I'll tell you what – (banging the table with the index finger of his left hand) look BILL you let the bastards get to you, I told you before – boy – put the boot in and walk away – it's as simple as that. (lifts the can off beer of the table and takes a long drink until some spills over his shirt)

JAMSEY That's right (takes a drink from the can) BILL no one cares about them – only scum – (slight pause) it's our duty – as loyalists – no one gets medals for treating the bastards like humans – do you think your IRENE would let you across her front door or JOYCE two doors up from here – if they thought you treated them with any sort of respect – or even humanity – their husbands were murdered by the bastards – (shouts) BILL be real. DON you tell him. (turns away from BOW in his seat)

DON Tell him what? – You're doing pretty well yourself JAMSEY.

JAMSEY (very agitated) DON you're English! How many of you have they sent home in boxes?

DON Look lads – I know what you're saying – but – we've only been here a year – this isn't our problem. It's a job to me that's all.

BOW Now wait a minute – DON – I don't believe I'm hearin this – are you tryin to say those low lives should be treated like people – like us?

BILL (stands up – walks over to the side of the fridge and puts his empty can into small bin then stands at the sink facing the table)

Look boys don't let this all get out of hand – I'm on the early tomorrow (looks down at his shoes moving his feet and says) look (speaks slowly) something happened today – (pause)

BOW (loudly) And what – go on don't keep us in suspenders.

BILL Look (hesitates) I need to tell it to someone – I just can't think (slight pause) straight I just didn't realize the enormity of it until I was on my own (stares a moment at his feet) you know when something happens and you go along with it thinking it's o.k. – normal – I suppose. Then suddenly you find yourself preoccupied by it – you just can't get it out of your mind.

DON Was it SMITH?

BILL (shakes his head) You know BOYLAN – out of 5 – well he got a letter passed to him on his visit – I brought him back – but I didn't get it – he must have swallowed it – BENSON and JONES held him down while me and BROWN stripped him – we forced him to squat over the mirror – (looks at each of them thoughtfully) but what got to me was he didn't squeal – he didn't make a noise at all – he just stared at the door the whole time – imagine – we as good as raped him and he just stares – JESUS CHRIST – (gestures with his hands) it – it left me cold – I thought – how can this low life – this bastard (moving his head) – how can he be like this – I haven't stopped thinking about him – all of them – all day (pause) it wasn't as if it was my first time –

JAMSEY That's right – BILL – you were in 4 when we went in with the hoses. That was F'en some crack then – yeah – I know what you mean – that affected me then – but I got over it – the way I see it now – it was all just in a day's work.

BILL I suppose that's the best way to look at it – (slight smile) I remember (nods his head but stares down at his feet) that's right – (still staring at his feet, lifts his head and points his finger at JAMSEY) the deck scrubbers – I never scrubbed so hard in all me life – it felt strange at first – but then –

JAMSEY Yeah it was sort of creepy at first.

BILL That's right – creepy – (looks up at JAMSEY)

JAMSEY But after the first body (pause) it was easy – in fact – almost enjoyable – (looking at BILL) wasn't it?

BILL It was hard earned overtime – I can tell you that – (pause)

DON What are you saying – seriously – you had to scrub them with deck scrubbers – serious –

BOW Excuse me DON – I just want to ask this question – don't mean to be ignorant or anything but this needs to be asked – BILL (stares into BILLS' eyes) let me get this right BILLY boy (stands up and walks over to BILL his arms are folded) you know I'm probably wrong – miles wrong – but you just sounded as though you have some sort of (searches into BILLS' eyes – pause) admiration for these bastards – BILLY – I'm wrong – aren't I? (nodding his head)

JAMSEY For 'Fs' sake BOW – now that was way out – way way out of order boy – I know exactly what BILL'S sayin (looking at BILL) BILL – I know – I understand – it's not anything like admirin the bastards – it's – it's well it's hard work for a start and when you really get into it – there's a lot of job satisfaction –

BOW Job satisfaction my behind – to put it mildly

JAMSEY Like today for instance – we were raidin 504's cell in H3

BOW That bastard – I know what I'd like to do with him – oh go on –

JAMSEY O.K. give me a minute for God's sake – you're always interruptin

BOW – can you keep the trap shut for just a moment (points with his finger to his mouth) well anyway as I was sayin we went in to raid 504's cell – I found a photo of his wife – it was under his beard – yak – (his body shivers all over) it turns me to think about it –

DON Is he doubled with 717; the ginger one?

JAMSEY That's right – he wouldn't stand up when we came in – (smiles) he did in the end – there was nothin really to search – (slight laugh) just those soakin mattresses and them – so anyway (moves his hands in gesture) they wouldn't hand over their blankets

(They all laugh except DON)

BOW Don't you get it DON – they wouldn't hand over their blankets – blankets – you know weapons – outside their weapons were bombs – now inside their weapons are blankets.

(DON still doesn't laugh)

DON Oh yeah – I get it now (the others stop laughing)

BOW Go on JAMSEY me lad – finish what you started – let us know how enlightened you are – concernin our captive bastards – go on we're waitin.

JAMSEY Well – I don't know about enlightenment I'm just sayin what it's like to (looks at everyone) well – have job satisfaction – or well – I mean to take pride in what you're doin – you must all know what I'm on about right (gestures with his hands) right –

BOW Go on I think we get the drift – what then – what happened next?

JAMSEY Well, big JESSIE was part of the squad – he takes no prisoners – excuse the pun – (nods his head from side to side as the others do except for DON) a few black eyes and sore guts – well no one would see them – they'd had their visit the day before – that would give them 3 weeks to mend – anyway as they both hit the wall, arms automatically thrown up I grab the blanket from 504 and a wee cut-up photo of his wife came falling from the blanket onto the soakin wet floor – (laughs) thought he was so smart –

BOW Let me finish – big JESS picks it up and carefully rips it into a hundred little pieces – while 504 looks on fallin to pieces himself?

JAMSEY No way – JESSIE wouldn't touch it even with gloves on – no – JESSIE'S yer man all right – he puts the heel of his boot on it – slides it across the stinkin floor to where TONER – I mean 504 is cowed down and as he lifted his heel – quicker than a blink – 504 swipes it up and shoves it into his mouth – chews it and as we all stand speechless he swallows it – it was so amazin – he was like a sea gull – swooping down almost mechanically – pickin a fish up from the sea – holdin it and then for fear of droppin it, eats it there and then, in mid air – (pause) imagine – a stinkin photo.

(silence for a few seconds – they all stare at the floor)

BILL Nice floor covering – DON never noticed it before!

DON Yeah – I know what you're saying JAMSEY – but to TONER it wasn't just a photo.

BOW Well DON what the hell was it then if it wasn't just a stinkin and I mean that literally – a stinkin photo?. Go on, what in your (sarcastically) wide experience of these things – was it ?.

DON Look you've got to understand (pause) he's there 3 years 4 ½ if you count his remand – right – he's in a confined space – 24 hours every day – right – still with me? (pause – hand gestures)

BOW (says slowly) No DON – we're not with you we're all somewhere else-

BILL Lads – I don't know about you lot but I'm on the early tomorrow – I'm off.

BOW (says sarcastically) BILLY you can't – we're about to be taught when a photo isn't a photo – by officer D.P. PENNYBURN – now BILLY this piece of intelligence is definitely worth doin without some sleep to hear – if we don't know how to establish when a photo is not really a photo – how can we be expected to carry out our duties in the prison service both correctly and efficiently – (stands to attention mockingly) there now DON – you have our undivided attention – pray proceed!

(DON stares at BOW and speaks in an annoyed sort of tone)

DON Look BOW – I'm not one of your prisoners – if you can't listen or have a reasonable conversation about things then that's O.K. but don't mock me – please.

BOW Don't mock – DON – mock as in king of the Jews?

DON That's it – it doesn't matter – everything's so – so frivolous to you – everything is just a joke – no wonder they (shakes his head and turns away)

BOW They what? – Go on who are you talkin about – those saintly bastards we keep locked up – I'll tell you this DON my boy – you may be from the mainland but your attitude hasn't gone unnoticed – a lot of us have been watchin you – yeah – talkin to them – smilin – hummin – tellin 302 –

DON Yes 302 – (says sharply) JOHNSON – you mean.

BOW That's what I mean – you call them by their names – they have no names – they're just numbers (shouting) they aren't like us – they never will be!

BILL Shut it BOW – a few drinks and you're off – I'm goin home – (looking at BOW) why do you have to take everything so serious – now cool it.

BOW Serious – BILL – (moves his head from side to side) unless we take it serious we can't win – ~(cringes his teeth) they take it serious – they – believe it or not, are still fightin their war from behind bars – don't tell me you can't see what's happenin – their weapons are their blankets, their smuggled letters and photos -that's like an operation to them – that's like a victory, one up our noses, the bastards can still laugh and cry, it's their will versus ours and we intend to win. And as for the government – MAGGIE fucking THATCHER knows those bastards are where they belong – and it's

us who's goin to teach them for her – not with books but with the boot – (lifts his foot as if he's going to kick DON) and as for you DON – I know exactly what you were going to say –

DON (agitated) Do you?

BILL Right I'm off this time – see you all next Monday – (walks out into the hall – JEAN is coming down the stairs)

JEAN Early start BILL?

BILL I'm up early in the mornin JEAN – I'll see you next week.

JEAN Good night then (can hear the door closing then JEAN walks into the kitchen wearing a blue gingham house coat and slippers) No wonder he's gone early – I heard you at it from up stairs (she folds her arms, gives DON a dirty look, lifts the kettle from the cooker walks over to the sink to fill the kettle with water and as she returns to the cooker with the kettle asks) anyone for tea –

JAMSEY No thanks JEAN – we're off now.

BOW Well (puts his hands in his pockets) if you can't stand the heat stay out of the kitchen (laughs)

JEAN For crying out loud BOW – we're on your side – look – I know what it's like – I'm from Glasgow – remember – we've problems there too – they're all the same –

DON (looking at JEAN) What do you mean – all the same.

JEAN (looking at BOW) No – no don't get me wrong – I mean they're the same in Glasgow as here – England's different – for 'F' sake stop this conversation – before we start beatin each other!

BOW (moves over to the sink) Sorry folks – look this is your home I've no right to come in here and expect you to – to – well agree with everything I say (sways slightly on his feet) you do at least understand – this is the first time in my life that I've come face to face with – (puts his bottom teeth on his upper lip – pause) I.R.A. scum.

DON BOW I keep getting the feeling that it's not just the I.R.A. you're talking about.

BOW Who or what then is it that I am talkin about? There is no difference as far as I'm concerned in any of them.

DON Then what you're saying is that you're a bigot – (there is a hushed silence and the others look the other way) You tell me (pause) anyone who doesn't think the same as you – look BOW – in London we don't get on like you lot here – everybody's the same – well almost everybody – if you're the same colour that is – you're the same – it's only the upper crust get on like that – though in a more subtle and refined way – less obvious – the rest of us just get on with it – tell me BOW – now honestly – if some one you cared about needed blood to save their life – would you care if it was from a Catholic – how could you tell the difference? Come on BOW be honest. Do blood transfusions carry a health – sorry spiritual warning – For Protestant use only – and one more thing – BOW explain to my ignorant English ears – what exactly is an Ulster Protestant rather than an English one? Can you explain – please!

BOW I've had a long day too – I'm off – see you tomorrow DON – oh I mean Wednesday – (stares at DON and says) you'll learn – wait till you're here a bit longer. (laughing) Know somethin DON – I'm beginnin to think that there's fenian blood in you somewhere along the line!..Ha Ha – just imagine.

JAMSEY (moves towards BOW) Take no notice of him DON he'll be alright by tomorrow (pushes BOW gently) Come on boy – time to go – (puts his hands in his pockets and sways on his feet)

BOW (walks over to JEAN and kisses her on the cheek) Gee but you're a good figure of a woman JEAN – I only wish I was goin home to some one like you – you're a lucky devil DON

(JEAN remains in the kitchen as DON walks them to the door)

DON Safe home boys – see you both on Wednesday. (door closes DON walks back into kitchen and opens fridge door and takes out a bottle of milk, walks over to the table and leaves it there – JEAN pours the hot water into the tea-pot, lifts two cups from the cupboard, sets them down then goes back and brings the tea-pot over to the table – she and DON sit down – JEAN pours the tea and they both take a sip – DON stretches his legs under the table and looks at JEAN for a moment without speaking)

JEAN What? Go on – what did I do – I know by that look – I’ve done somethin you disapprove of!

DON (takes a deep breath) I was a bit taken aback there – JEAN – you were almost as bad as him!

JEAN (speaks very softly) I wasn’t – I’m not anything like him – (shrugs her shoulders, unties her apron – takes it off and sets it on the back of her chair, pours DON tea –then her own – she smiles at DON and says) you changed all that – I was never as bad as that anyway – (DON looks up at JEAN) I thank God I met you – (puts her hand half way over the table – DON puts his hand half way – then they hold hands tightly and JEAN closes her eyes and says) you showed me the light – DON – I love you.

DON I only brought you back to normality – JEAN your family – the way they think – it’s not right – that’s not the way I was brought up – my dad died when I was young – my mom had a hard life – but she gave me so much – she taught me to respect others – their beliefs – their colour – I can’t hate – not just like that – (JEAN pulls her hand away)

JEAN I don’t hate – but I do understand – this Catholic and Protestant thing – it’s always been a part of our culture – it’s a traditional thing – but sometimes some people take it all too far!

DON You don’t hate now JEAN – but you did when I met you. Remember. You didn’t know anything about me – you just assumed. When you realized I was Catholic it was too late you were already crazy about me- (laughs) now don’t deny it.

JEAN You know that frightens me in a way – I mean – say I’d known you were a taig (smiles as if to tease him) sorry – old habits die hard – I mean a Catholic (slight pause and smile) I probably wouldn’t have bothered with you and (looks admiringly into his eyes) I’d (shakes her head a little) I’d never have known real love – real honest – true love (she shivers) thank God I didn’t know.

DON JEAN (hesitates for a moment) do you realize the enormity of what we’re saying – do you?

JEAN I told you – yes I do and it scares me to bits. DON – you know they still don’t know that you’re not one of them – don’t you!

DON What's the big deal anyway – they accept me for who I am. Knowing that I'm not a 'prod' (smiles) wouldn't make a bit of difference to that lot, it's republicans they despise not Catholics – (nods his head from side to side)

JEAN O.K. then tell them next week when you go in! Just say hi guys – Fr Mc Cann gave a wonderful sermon yesterday in Mass and see what they all say – go on DON I dare ya.

DON Look JEAN – I can tell you now it wouldn't make the slightest bit of difference to any of them.

JEAN I think you're a coward – (she takes DON'S hand and squeezes it hard he tries to pull it away but she has it gripped too tightly)

DON O.K. then I'll do just that. Next week. You'll see.

JEAN O.K. then next week – we'll see!

(music begins to play in back-ground 'Mavericks' singing 'Blue Moon' they both stand up and begin to dance a slow waltz as they gaze into one another's eyes) LIGHTS OUT: END OF ACT

ACT 2

Begins in kitchen – DON, BOW, JAMSEY and BILL are all playing cards as usual on a Monday night. JEAN is out with the three men's partners. BOW'S partner also works in the H Blocks as a 'searcher'. (She searches visitors going in on their visits) The men are all seated around the table. There are glasses, beer cans, and money on table top. A plate of sandwiches covered with tin-foil is on top of the fridge.

JAMSEY (spreading cards on table) Full house – (smiling) beat that – (he pulls money on table towards himself and says) I'm quittin while I'm ahead – no sense temptin fate. Promised VALERIE we'd go to Turkey for a week at Easter. (slight pause) By the way DON – any word about your mum – any better?

DON No change – she's still the same – I'm going over for a few days next week – if she can travel she'll come back here for a while – JEAN will take good care of her – and then we'll decide if she'll stay over permanently or what.

BOW JAMSEY, VALERIE has you well trained you're quittin even though you're on a roll! (throws his cards on to table takes a hankie out of his pocket blows his nose then picks the cards up again and looks at them)

JAMSEY Not even when I'm on a roll – by the way – you know COULTER got the promotion.

BOW That was a foregone conclusion – he's a mason.

DON Why aren't you one BOW? (BOW lifts his eyebrows and looks at DON comically) – why don't you join up and get yourself some promotion!

BOW (pauses as he throws down his cards onto table) Nah – BUCHANAN spoke for me way last April – I heard nothing afterwards – so I took that as a 'no'.

BILL Did you ask him what they said – I mean – why they turned you down?

BOW Don't be daft – son – you don't ask them people questions like that!

BILL Why not – (DON gets up from table and goes over to plate on fridge, removes tin-foil, takes a few sandwiches and begins to eat them – the others follow him over and pick through the sandwiches)

BOW 'Cause they might tell you – and some things you're better not knowin – in other words BILL I aint got the right connections! Fair play to them – (DON stares at BOW for a moment then looks at JAMSEY and says while gesturing with his hands)

DON How can he say that – (he turns to BOW and repeats it twice) BOW – how can you stand there and say that – how can you say – 'fair play' – as if you're not a person – don't you think you were entitled to know what they were saying about you – don't you – doesn't it even interest you to know why you weren't good enough – what's fair about a secret society discussing you as a possible asset and then deciding that you're not good enough to be one of them! (DON walks over to the table and sits down – he puts his arms on table and then puts his face in his hands)

JAMSEY (standing eating sandwich) Now – now DON – just don't take all this so personal on BOW'S behalf – if it doesn't bother BOW then it shouldn't bother you either!

DON (without lifting his head to look at JAMSEY he says loudly) I thought anybody could join if they were so inclined. –

BOW (stares at DON and says sarcastically) Look English know it all – it's a secret society – you should know better than the rest of us – you have to be 'some one' to get in with that lot – I'm not sure now if I want to join them. They might expect something I can't deliver – it just doesn't bother me in the least I know plenty who were turned down!

DON So why did you want to join in the first place then? And what about COULTER – how did he get in – he's a regular sort of guy! What influence would he have that could be of any importance to the Masons?

BOW Family connections – his da and a few uncles – his da believe it or not was a top notcher with the special branch; now that's what I would call a very influential man – a branch man; the ma ran away with a taig – though he was only a rank and file cop! COULTER went with her – he was only a kid at the time, though she never turned her coat – but it's still there – being among them is bound to rub off on you – isn't it?

DON (stares before he speaks) But there are Catholics in the masons – every one knows that –

BOW You mean ex ones – and they'd be top people – (laughs) how else would they have got to the top here. Right connections and you're made – they make things work here – you must at least know that? They sit and plan the rules that we all live by here! Well that's my opinion anyway.

DON (DON slips back into the chair putting his hands into his pockets but still doesn't look at anyone) Maybe, maybe not –

BOW Suit yourself then – (smirks and walks over to table and pulls out a chair, turns it around and sits on it resting his chin on back and just stares at DON)

DON What about BUCHANAN – did it ever occur to you that he may not have put your name forward in the first place? Maybe he doesn't want you to join the masons at all, do you trust his integrity that much that you didn't even bother to ask him if and why you were turned down. (pause) Of course, maybe you weren't turned down at all! (looks at BOW waiting for his reaction)

BOW No as a matter of fact it never occurred to me at all – you just don't question men like BUCHANAN for starters O.K. DON – Mr English man. Oh yeah – we do trust him without reservation (without looking round at the others he says) right boys – DON seems to have a problem here with our way of doin things here in our little province.

BILL No problem there BOW. We all know the score. And I suppose we all must agree with it – right JAMSEY – right.

JAMSEY If you say so then – (starts tapping his foot on the floor)

BOW There now DON, see what I mean, we all think the same here, but what about you DON – how would you have dealt with COULTER'S history, would you have let him join? You coming from the home of the Masonic kingdom – Westminster – isn't that where you hail from – DONEY boy?

DON Yes I'm from Westminster – that's right – though I didn't think I'd ever mentioned that – but to firstly answer your question BOW – what would it have to do with me? I can only answer that question with a question – and I couldn't care less what he was – or who he's related too! I'm not into secret societies!

BOW Yeah – but you're from the mainland – there's all sorts of mixed breeds there – you lot were warned by great men like ENOCH POWELL – we have PAISLEY here – if he had his way all taigs would be shipped over to Australia or some other colony.

DON Don't talk rubbish BOW – Australia! – Australia! – What say would you have in who should be shipped off to Australia? – (DON pushes his chair out from under him, he stands up and shouts at BOW) who are you kidding – you talk as if these six little counties that you only play in – that your elected reps have made a mess of – you think living here gives you by some sort of right – a say in the running of our country – my country! You poor sod – (BOW jumps up and goes to grab DON but is held back by the others as they jump up from their chairs)

JAMSEY DON – that was out of order – (moving over to DON waving his left arm in the air he holds BOW down with his right arm around his chest)

BILL (walks round and forces DON to sit down) DON what's got into you – what needled you –

DON (just stares at the table then says) I know – I'm sorry – I don't know what came over me – (puts his two hands in the air)

BOW You bastard – you fucking bastard – (gets up to walk out but is held back again by JAMSEY who finally gets him to sit down) You think you are somebody – (laughs loudly for about 6 seconds) you bastard – you nearly had me fooled there – you think you're so superior – don't you – English idiot!

JAMSEY Look BOW – he said he's sorry he's things on his mind! (JAMSEY and BILL pull chairs out and sit down)

DON Look fellas – (shakes his head from side to side) I'm sorry – I just don't seem to get the hang of all these things here; I'm used to life being straight forward – no complications – no bigotry – all these things – I can live without – I just wanted to turn the table and let you see how you sound to me at times! Well at least I got your backs up. O.K. mates. That's all I wanted to do, just let you all see how it feels to be an outsider – a suspect!

BOW O.K. mate – but I'll be watching you from now on – got it?

(all lean back on chairs and stare at one another for a few minutes, the silence is broken by BILL)

BILL Anyone see CHARLES new girl? Looks like this is the one for him. She's lovely and very shy.

BOW Yeah – and she even works. Now that's what I call a surprise!

DON You know BOW she's a SPENCER and they've Catholic blood in them, and Diana if she does marry CHARLIE, is going to be Queen one day, it's very likely – you know – there's a lot of talk about it now – well BOW – what would you think of that then?

BOW Well for starters I don't believe it – no – I don't believe that for one second! The constitution states quite clearly that the British monarchy has to be Protestant – no taig can ever be King or Queen- so there you are – DON – how come you didn't know that! (silence)

DON Well actually BOW – whoever the monarch is – be it King or Queen is automatically head of the Church of England – (BOW starts to tap his fingers on table impatiently) so if that clause was taken from the constitution

– then there would be no restriction on what religion the monarch was – of course within reason.

JAMSEY Well DON – for someone who's pretty tolerant regarding religion over here you're not really so tolerant regarding your own Royals, I mean our Royals, the Royal family – now are you?

BOW His Royals – his Royals – JAMSEY – what 'f'en' well are you talkin about – his 'f'en' Royals – they're our buckin Royals – not just theirs – this is the United Kingdom – not just the bloody London Kingdom – it's the United Kingdom – and we're part of it just like Manchester or Bristol – or anywhere else in the country – right –

DON (looks at JAMSEY) I wouldn't have used Bristol as an example but still – fair point – (my problem is you see – I don't agree with that in any case, because, in fact, I'm a republican; I don't approve of royalty, they're an unnecessary expense as far as I can see. (pauses and looks at the shock on each of their faces) But they're a fact in British life and so I think it shouldn't matter what religion the Queen or King or any member of the Royal family is – I think it is their own business, it's the one thing they should have the freedom to choose for themselves — we all like to think we're right and that we're the ones who exercise tolerance – we can all see the needle in the other person's eye – but I'm only half as guilty as you lot –

BOW Well you've kept all this quiet boy, you're a bloody hypocrite! Preaching to us about being bigots – you're a bloody bigot yourself – tell me this – no – on second thoughts don't even bother, I don't want to hear anything you'd say about our beloved Queen, God bless 'er. But tell us this when was the last time you got up off your arse on a bus to give a pregnant Asian woman your seat?

DON I never use buses – I've always had my own transport –

BOW You mean you've never used the London underground? Who are you kiddin – boy – (they all stare at DON waiting on his reaction to BOW'S question)

DON You said bus – not tube – not underground. I only answered the question you asked me!

BOW (laughing) Oh boy – (lies back in chair and puts his hands behind his head relaxed looking and crosses his feet) we do learn something every day – our DON here has a touch of the ‘politicianio’ about him – you answer the question with such ease and gracefulness!

DON (fiddles about with cards on table) It’s not a case of being a ‘politician’ io – it’s a case of we’re from two different islands – different cultures, you and me.

BOW No more shit! (laughs and gestures with his fingers – calling him over to listen to him closer) You’re sounding better than them bastards we keep locked up – you must be listenin to them at nights shoutin out to one another tryin to educate themselves – shit head bastards!

JAMSEY Well at least they’re tryin to go out better than when they came in – that can’t be bad – (BOW stares at JAMSEY – who looks away nervously) Well it keeps them busy – it’s better than hatchin up plans to escape or wreck the place –

BOW Bleep Bleep JAMSEY (says mockingly) what planet do you live on – enter the real world – the Blocks are like a ‘university for terrorists’. Wise up – yeah – the bastards will come out educated – and that’s just what we don’t want! They’re all dickheads and that’s the way we want them kept! – understand – just imagine them standin for elections – yeah and winnin – just say that ever happened – we have to remind them who their real masters are; if only they’d been born black – it would be easier to identify them! Instead of SEAN and CORMAC they’d all be called SAMBO and Uncle TOM. It’s much easier to identify your enemy by colour than creed, you’re standin next to them in a bus queue somewhere and you don’t even know who they are – friend or foe!

JAMSEY (laughing) Oh BOW, you’re a poet and you don’t know it!

DON BOW, have you ever had a blood transfusion to save your life?
(silence) Better still, have you ever heard yourself – when you talk like that.

BOW (laughs) I know what you’re goin to say next – mate – but I don’t wear it – that doesn’t wash on me at all – that’s completely different – you know what I’m talkin about – yeah – it might be double standards in your book – but so what – if I had my way the blood banks would all be segregated –

taigs blood for taigs – Protestant blood for Prods – double standards – so what – as I’ve said – it would be easier if they were black –

JAMSEY You just go too far BOW – you go too far!

BOW (gets up and says) I’m away to the bogs! (moves towards the door and walks out – he can be heard running up the stairs – when the toilet door bangs after him the others all look at one another)

JAMSEY Change the subject quick – before he comes down. He was at a lodge meetin last night – it tends to reinforce in him his superiority over the less entitled than himself.

BILL I was afraid to say in front of BOW – but – remember I was saying about our IRIS in Manchester – well she’s got engaged to a bloke his name’s CHRIS – and guess what – he’s R.C. It might fizzle out – but she seems very happy about it – she was bit before by one of our own and me and her mam couldn’t go through all that again!. We couldn’t bear to see her hurt like the last time again.

DON So what’s wrong with that – how can it matter what this bloke is as long as he’s good to your daughter BILL! (JAMSEY cuts in quickly)

JAMSEY BILL believe me I understand what you’re goin through, something similar happened in our family a few years ago, but things usually sort themselves out in the end. (leans across the table and looks directly into BILL’S face) Your right BILL I wouldn’t mention this to BOW or to any one else in work. Keep it all to yourself for now! (leans back into his chair)

DON Man, but you’re all crazy – I don’t believe religion can do this to people, I’ve heard and I’ve seen but I still just can’t believe! (none of them respond – they all just sit staring at the table until BOW’S footsteps are heard coming back down the stairs – when he enters the kitchen he’s holding a scapular, i.e. a piece of material worn under clothing for religious reasons, he holds it at arms length by the string)

BOW What’s this piece of papist – somethin – doin in our DON’S bathroom? Can someone explain?

DON (DON’S face turns red with embarrassment) What’s our BOW doing in my bathroom cabinet?

BOW (walks over to the fridge and takes out a can of beer – pulls it open and takes a drink – remains standing in front of fridge without blinking he stares at DON and says) force of habit, you know that DON, it's hard not to want to see what someone's got hidden away in their cupboard, now isn't it? In our type of job it's like second nature! Wouldn't you agree? (DON doesn't reply, BOW motions to the others to speak by moving the can in their directions)

(DON looks at the other two and they cough and clear their throats nervously then DON speaks)

DON Well I don't know about anyone else, but I leave the job in work, I don't treat my mates as 'suspect' that's low – I mean really low! BOW let me (points his finger at BOW) tell you something – if JEAN were here she'd ask you to leave, and she wouldn't be too polite about it either!

BOW I don't think so DON – I don't think so –

DON Well I know so, she wouldn't take it too well if she thought someone was snooping through her private drawers! (they all laugh and DON becomes very agitated)

JAMSEY (says jokingly) BOW – that's not on – it's just not on – in a mate's home and looking through his wife's drawers.

THEY ALL LAUGH

DON Don't make light of it JAMSEY – you wouldn't like me to go through any of your private things – would you? (BOW bangs the can of beer down on the fridge top and walks over to the table and sits back on his chair – he folds his arms and dangles the scapular over the table and finally lets go of the strings and drops it on the table – DON looks at him with disgust and then says) well Bow have you made some sort of point in all this –

BOW You tell me DON lad – go on – what's this papist (flicks the scapular over with his finger) piece of germ infested rag doing in your bathroom – (pauses) cabinet? come on boy – tell us! (pause) Come on DON – we're waitin – speak – come on – DON – we're your three best mates, we all work together every day – we all do a job that requires your mates watchin your back for ya – it requires a lot of trust between a man and his mates – come

on – DON – trust us – tell us what this (points to scapular with his finger) papist thing was doin in your bathroom cabinet?

(BILL, BOW and JAMSEY sit around the table and stare down at their shoes – then BOW starts to tap his left foot on floor and begins to tap his fingers on the table to the tune of ‘the sash my father wore’ – they are all waiting for DON to break the silence – in the meantime the phone rings and DON waits for a few moments before he looks at his watch and answers it out in the hall – as soon as DON is in the hall the 3 put their heads together and begin to whisper. After a few minutes DON returns to the kitchen with his head bent down)

BOW Well mate – (there’s a silence of a few moments before BOW jokes to DON saying) ‘What’s up Doc’ (the others laugh quietly as DON pulls a chair from the table and flops down on it)

JAMSEY Everything all right –

DON My mother’s just died! (DON puts his head in his hands)

ENDS: LIGHTS OUT

ACT 3

Scene begins in kitchen. DON and JEAN are sitting at table. There are sympathy cards and pages on the table and DON is reading the London Telegraph. He folds it gently and lays it on the table on top of the cards. He looks at JEAN and says:

DON ROBBIE will hardly be coming.

JEAN No, but, he sends his condolences. It’s the journey DON……. with his broken leg and all.

DON Why should he go to the funeral of a woman he refused to meet – Why can’t you be honest JEAN, it would go against everything his life’s been about – bigotry – he’s a bigot – he tolerates me because of you, he doesn’t even know another Catholic JEAN, does he?. I know though I’ve never said before – none of his brethren know I’m Catholic – (looks at JEAN then quickly looks away) don’t even try denying it – don’t – that would hurt too too much – (silence) I’m glad he won’t be there, I just couldn’t be bothered with

the charade any more!(brief silence – then they both go to speak at the one time but DON indicates with a nod of the head for Jean to speak first)

TOGETHER What -you – go on-

JEAN What about work – what did they say DON – (she holds her hand across the table for DON to touch, he holds her hand with his two hands and then lets go of them as he stands and walks to the back of his chair and just stands there)

DON I rang and asked to speak to COULTER – he just asked where would they send the wreath to – I told him -St Anne's Chapel Earls Court Road London W8. There was a long pause, though, apparently his own mother ran off with a Catholic (sighs) maybe he was thinking we'd something in common – oh I don't know. I don't care. I don't even know why I said that – as if it makes any difference to anything any more! If what you're asking me JEAN is if they know – the answer is I think they always did know. Don't try to tell me that I fit in here – or that I'm like them – because I'm not – I don't want to be – I don't want to be a bigot – (pause) bigotry destroys everything – this has all got way out of proportion – this religion thing – (closes his eyes for a few seconds and then begins to pace up and down the floor) your da has a lot to answer for – (JEAN doesn't speak – she just stares at the table) it was his bigotry that drove us here – and only to find the same type of bigots here as well – I feel sick and tired of all this. My mother's just died and all I can think about is – now they know I'm a 'taig' – God help me! I feel sick in my gut – because I've been caught out – it's so senseless – so negative – (shakes his head) why does it matter – JEAN – why does it matter?

JEAN That's out of all proportion – that's crazy thinkin like that – there's no reason to be feelin like this at a time like this – when your mother's just died! (she gets up and walks over to DON and puts her arm around his shoulder and kisses him on the cheek)

DON I've not only lost my mother, but I feel like I've lost something else – something partly to do with my mother – by hiding what I am to them it's like I was ashamed of my mother – she loved her religion – I just can't comprehend why I'm feeling like this! who I am (slight pause) or was – I've thrown it all away – I compromised my beliefs – I've hidden my real self – I

was afraid of rejection – and for what – for nothing. It was a mistake. My beliefs used to mean more to me than – than – just being accepted by people who – really shouldn't matter that much to me! The pain of rejection (shakes his head slowly) how did I let them matter – they only accept anyone who's like themselves! Who am I or what am I? (puts his head in between his hands) I'm a fool – a damned fool am I! (JEAN tries to pull his hands open to hug him but he resists and stumbles across to the sink and leans over sink and cries)

JEAN DON DON please let me in – please – don't shut me out don't..... don't (she begins to cry and walks over to him puts her arm around him – then they both walk across to the table and sit down facing one another with hands touching) what is it – is it your mum or all this here? I mean I know – I know it's your mum – but I can't understand the rest – why you're letting all this affect you like this.

DON You really don't get it – you just don't understand – (pause – he tries to talk but at first the words don't come out – then finally he says) you were born into bigotry – you can't see anything wrong with it – you didn't even realise that there was a whole good world there – out side of your narrow existence – you just didn't know and the reason you didn't know was because you listened to him and you loved him (shouts) – your da – your da – I can't even say his name – him and all the others whose life's achievements are the creation of a little factory that manufactures bigotry – they created it out of nothing – driven by their own damned bitterness – they spread it like sugar on top of a piece of bread and butter – and they feed it to the hungry who're looking for fulfilment; even though they know they're destroying part of the whole person – some like it – and think its actually good for you (pause – shaking his head from side to side) then people like us meet and fall in love – (shouts) love – it was love again – yeah – let's blame it all on love – it takes love to make you hate and love to make you love – love -love – damn love! – I hate love – (crying) if I hadn't loved my mother I wouldn't be feeling this pain – this absolute disgust I have at this moment for myself – (long pause) as he (ROBBIE) would say “I've sold out” – and I have –

JEAN No – don't say that – you (she tries to pet his head – but he lifts his head up and away from her) how have you sold out? I'm confused – your mum's dead and all this – what – (she looks at him puzzled – then after a moment or two she says) O.K. – O.K. – you think he would say that you've 'sold out' – well sometimes I feel like I've sold out – yeah – sold out – (she jumps up and starts to pace up and down) yeah everything's all you and your beliefs – no one else's just yours!

DON Go on get it all out – since we arrived here I know you've been bottling things up – now's your chance – come on get it all off your chest – come on spit it all out – (she is still pacing up and down) come on dear – do a BOW – come on pretend you can't help it – pretend it's the way you are – and you just can't help it – come on get it all off your chest! And – wait for it – it's such a big and beautiful chest – according to BOW the bigot! (laughs and bangs his fist on table)

JEAN (runs her hands through her hair) You bastard!

DON Bastard – well now at least we're getting somewhere – or is it nowhere – or is it just plain back to where we started! But at least this time around we both know where we stand – at least we know what the other is –

JEAN Don't you tell me about bein a bigot – yeah I was a bigot – I know that – but you – yeah – you do disgust me – because you are a hypocrite – what about the Asians – the Blacks – (laughs) the French and even the Germans – yeah and what about the Italians! Come off it – you're a worse bigot than me or my da could ever be!

DON It's not the same –

JEAN What's not the same? – Because you don't go out with a gun or a bomb – to shoot or blow them all up – bigotry begins with a thought – I thought you knew that!

DON You're mind is so warped – you don't even know the difference any more –

JEAN Don't I – then you don't really know me – (goes over and sits down at the table and puts her head on her arms on the table) ROBBIE got it right – he said we'd never get it right – and surprise surprise – ROBBIE was right –

DON He's right all right, but only because you let him be right! He could do nothing wrong in your mind – could he? No of course not – go on be honest for once!

JEAN (lifts her head up to look at him – she stares for a moment before saying with passion) Honest for once – you don't know what you're sayin – honest – (bangs her fist down on table) when we lie naked together is that not honest? – When our bodies labour and sweat together – is that not honest? Is my vulnerability when I tell you how much I love you – is that not honest – I have never been more honest in all my life than when I make love to you – I have never lied to you – is that not honest – but maybe you can't see the truth for what it is! (stares at him intensely for a moment then gets up from chair and looks down at him – he doesn't look up immediately – joins her hands together putting them to her lips as if praying and begins to stand behind him then begins saying) Some little dark secret that's just surfaced and that you can't handle. (slight pause) Maybe or maybe something – (shrugs her shoulders) or maybe just nothin at all. (turns in his seat slightly to meet her gaze then quickly turns back round putting his head between his hands with his elbows on the table as she takes a few paces forward round to the front of the table facing him) Do you want to know what I think – what I really think this is all about (he doesn't move and she starts to pace around the table until she finishes speaking – she doesn't look at him until her last few words – she begins slowly) I think – (then loudly) I think – (slightly lower) that you're a coward – (pauses) oh not a coward who's afraid to fight – you border on the thin line between being brave and being a bully – you've stuck with BOW and the lads because – well because – there wasn't anybody else for you to stick to – the only other ones in work were the prisoners – you talkin about them as if they're human was your way of gettin your own back on BOW and JAMSEY and BILL for bein there first – just for bein here before you and layin down their ground rules, rules that you didn't make – rules that you have to fall in line with – you're just like them – and you know it – that's what you can't hack about ROBBIE – (slight pause) what he is – he's not afraid to be – he doesn't give a damn – about what anybody thinks about him – and you can't hack that either! (pauses and puts her hands back up to her lips and paces as though she's thinking deeply – she doesn't look at him)

DON (bangs his fist down on table without looking up and says) No – No – No – you’ve got it all wrong – if that’s what you really think – then (shakes his head slightly from side to side) then – I just don’t know – (pausing slightly but says in the same breath as he closes his eyes) JEAN – (then puts his head back in to his hands without opening his eyes – she then walks over and puts her palms on table facing him and looks directly into his eyes)

JEAN DON – don’t say it – don’t say that everything’s been a lie – (points her finger at him and shouts) Don’t (bursts into tears – he is unmoved – he remains in his seat – (lights go out for about 30 seconds – but when they go back on a sign will let audience know that 30 minutes have passed – neither of them have spoken)

DON (they are both seated at the table – puts his hand out to take hers) Better? – it’s always better after you cry – I think I love you most when you’re vulnerable – maybe that’s the bully side of me (shakes his head and smiles) just kidding – I hope you were too – (pause) the absolute honesty of your tears JEAN – make me want to put my arms out to catch what you’re letting go – your true self – your weakness, your fear, your gift of real and honest love for me – it’s when you’re at your most vulnerable (pauses to choose his words carefully) that all these things about you – not your strength; no – not your confidence, no – not even your pretty face – or your cheeky and at times self-righteousness – no it’s your vulnerability that I love and need about you – (slight pause) that’s when my love for you just bursts out and wants to consume you – just as you are! (she puts both her hands into his – he squeezes them) your vulnerability – it drives me crazy! (says very deliberately as he takes his right hand and puts a kiss on it then as they both gaze into one another’s eyes he blows it to her) I love you. (still gazing into each others eyes he moves her hands from side to side) Love me – love me (in desperation) – please. I’m like a drowning man – save me – JEAN! (pulls her hands to his lips and gently kisses them at the tips of her fingers – she breaks the stare and closes her eyes and puts her head down) I suppose you think that was a stupid thing to say – (he squeezes her hands until she looks up into his eyes again – she slowly shakes her head from side to side before she speaks)

JEAN No – no it's not!

DON No (laughs)

JEAN No I mean it's not stupid – it's lovely – deep and sensitive – (they smile at one another) you know – you're the most thoughtful and sensitive man I've ever known!

DON I want to go – JEAN

JEAN Go – go where?

DON I can't stay here – after the funeral we'll come back and pack – put this place on the market – we can leave after I work my notice – I know I've a small inheritance – not such a lot but enough – we – can go almost as soon as I know I've got a job – oh don't worry – I've applied – everything going as planned –

JEAN (jumps up) What – what are you sayin man – you've been planin this without consultin me about anything! you pig – (shouts) I haven't a clue what your talking about – job – location – what job – where – where!

DON JEAN – I thought –

JEAN Yeah – you thought – you – you – you- always you! Come on tell me where and what!

DON As far away from here as possible –

JEAN Come on DON you already know – tell your wife – where to – ?

DON Well – (looks seriously at her) like – like (whispers) South Africa –

JEAN (putting on a forced laugh) What! I don't believe you – from ROBBIE – to here – 'the Ulster problem' – and now – (laughs loudly) now South Africa – (cups his hands together and speaks very low)

DON What do you mean – explain – go on –

JEAN South Africa – yeah – they'd just love us there – wouldn't they? (takes a deep breath and stands up straight) why don't you ring ROBBIE and get him to come along too?

DON JEAN – you're not making any sense – South Africa – is a place that's going to change – the prison camps there are full – they're over flowing – I'd get a job there (clicks his fingers) just like that!

JEAN And what – go on – you'd get friendly with the prisoners – you'd empathise – to use one of your most used words – you'd empathise with the prisoners – you wouldn't see them as prisoners you'd see them as people – and way ho – somewhere there'd be another BOW or JAMSEY – they're everywhere DON – you can't be that dumb – they even have ROBBIES over there – I know that scenario too well – its got to become like an old refrain – DON – I know it off by heart! (walks over to the sink and leans over it with her head down – then she swings round to face him again and says) DON – hasn't anyone ever told you that you're in the wrong job? (she folds her arms and walks about the floor) Tell me this one thing DON –

DON Go on JEAN – what is it – what is it you need to know? Go on – hit me with it!

JEAN O.K. – tell me – what did your mother say when you came home and told her what you wanted to do with your life?

DON (smiles and closes his eyes and then speaks) Well JEAN, she understood – yes I suppose she did ask if I was sure – if I was strong – strong enough for what it all entailed.

JEAN Yeah – but what did she say exactly? –

DON (takes a deep breath and then speaks) Well – as a matter of fact – she was in the kitchen when I told her I'd got the job – she knew I'd applied for it and had my medical and had been for the second interview – yes – we didn't speak about it until I actually got the job – (stares thoughtfully for a few seconds) maybe she did think I wouldn't be up to it – and didn't mention it until it was about to become a reality – (stares again) Mmmmm

JEAN Then she knew her son well!

DON (stares at her before answering) She loved her son – and to an extent – I suppose – she knew him also – (pause)

JEAN She knew you weren't suited to this kind of job – lockin people up – even though they deserve it – right!

DON No – not always right – (slight pause) yes I know – most people are locked up because they deserve to be locked up – but there's always one at least one (stops speaking for a moment then continues) look JEAN – I know you'll not understand this –

JEAN DON – don't underestimate me – you think I don't care about people – you think ROBBIE – and even BOW don't care – yeah – I know we're all alike in some of our ways of thinkin – but we're still human bein's – you don't always get it – you – yeah you go with the underdog – sometimes I think you just go along with the underdog for the sake of it – to be different!

DON Rubbish and you know it (points his finger at her as he speaks) – don't start all that again – please – please don't

JEAN What's wrong – can't hack the truth –?

DON What's the truth got to do with it?

JEAN Oh shut it – you're startin to sound like TINA TURNER.

DON Back then to where we started –

JEAN If only we could – no religion – politics – no more lookin for a cause – no need to move –

DON JEAN – I've lost my mother! – do you understand that much – I can't change that – but please – I'll do whatever I have to just so I don't lose you – I do love you – I do! I can't live without you in my life JEAN I can't!

JEAN This might sound like a silly question – or maybe really it's an answer to a question I've been afraid to ask – about the truth our truth – did you ever love me – did we ever love each other – or was it just love we loved to make ourselves believe we were in – you know DON – you know what I really think –

DON Go on then – say it – what ever it is – say it – just say it and get it over with –

JEAN (begins to walk up and down past table) I think you saw me as (puts her fingers together as she quotes) 'a poor little underdog' – yeah – it's all just come to me now – seein you in this light for the first time – you needed to rescue me from big bad daddy ROBBIE – right –

DON No no no – wrong – wrong – wrong –

JEAN I bet –

DON If I hadn't got you away from him he'd have destroyed you – you know that!

JEAN That's what you think – I was happy with my life – I could still be happy with my life – I had a good life – at least I was never ashamed of standin up and sayin what I was – not like you DON – (joins her hands and points her two forefingers together like a gun and points them at him as she says) not like you! You are a coward in fact I don't think you did love me – no – I think you wanted to do the big boy, in your mind you really believed that you were rescuing poor me – that's it – isn't it? Go on admit it – go on – if you're man enough!

(he becomes very distressed and takes out a handkerchief and begins to wipe his forehead and lips with it)

DON JEAN – can we not forget all what has just been said – (wipes his forehead again – closes his eyes and rubs them before opening them and continues speaking) I just don't understand how you can't see my point (slowly and quietly) of view – tell me – tell me now – do you still – no no I don't mean do you still – I mean I'm asking you 'do you love me.'

(PUTS HIS HEAD DOWN WAITING FOR HER ANSWER – SHE LOOKS AWAY AND WALKS OVER TO THE SINK AND PUTS HER HANDS ON EACH SIDE OF SINK AND HER HEAD DOWN. IN BACK GROUND DRUMS ARE BEATING SLOWLY AT FIRST AND THEN QUICKENS UP – THE BEAT OF THE DRUMS ISN'T A TUNE BUT IT'S A FOREBODING OF SOME DISASTER THAT IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN – LIGHTS ARE LOWERED QUICKLY AND THEN OUT COMPLETELY FOR ABOUT 30 SECONDS – WHEN THE LIGHTS GO BACK ON ITS TO AN EMPTY KITCHEN A FEW WEEKS LATER. THE PHONE IN THE HALL RINGS AND FOOT STEPS ARE HEARD COMING DOWN STAIRS – THE VOICE ANSWERING THE PHONE BELONGS TO ROBBIE)

ROBBIE Hello (pause) yes it's me ROBBIE, that's right, BOW isn't it? (pause) yeah I recognise your voice. No no no – I'm almost finished packin, no not everything, just what I know she'd want me to take – everythin's fine,

the van 'ill be here shortly, I'm getting the 6'o clock; her first boat trip was with me and now her last is with me as well. They said she died on impact, he was drivin.....swerved to save a bloody dog; stupid bastard – my wee girl's life ended.....and the stupid dog was hit by the car behind them! They were catching the 8am flight. No – honestly – you have all been more than good. (pause) She'll be buried along with her mother, that's how SADIE' would've wanted it (pause) SADIE and JEAN were very close – they were very alike – (pause) and now they'll be together – I can visit them both now – together – (pause) no no I don't know who's takin his body (pause) no I didn't ask – but what I do know is he'll not go down on top of my wee girl, I rue the day he tuck her from me. I told her it could only ever end in disaster – and I was right – different – they were too different – I told JEAN – stick to your own – don't bother with the other sort – you know what it's like BOW – (pause) yeah so I'm told; (pause) yeah I know, if she'd knew what he was she'd never have entertained 'im. (pause) Two tickets, two one way tickets – (pause) South Africa – I don't know why there – JEAN never mentioned it before – (pause) o.k. (pause) no BOW I lost my wee girl the day she met 'im. Yes yes that's right – life's strange – o.k. BOW – I'll see you all – yourself, JAMSEY and BILLY, yes she'd be pleased. I'll see you all there..... bye and thanks! (phone goes down and lights go out)

End

This drama came about when I was approached by The West Belfast Cultural Society to write a short play for their annual commemoration and also to raise funds for their 'Garden of Remembrance' which was being erected on the Falls Road facing Conway Street. I was honoured to be a part of the fund raising campaign and had already travelled with Dipper Dempsey and Dominic O Neill doing several shows with them of their own production 'Men from 1916 to The Hunger-strike'. It was a very moving drama consisting mainly of personal letters written by the dead patriots at crucial and historic moments in their lives.

The process of writing about the individual volunteer weighed heavily on me at times because of the nature of each of their deaths; however, getting to know each man and woman who died for the cause of Irish Freedom and trying to do their story justice was personally very rewarding. The only

possible way I could tell each story comfortably in this drama was to write it from a spiritual perspective; and in preparation prayed for the help of each of the volunteers to inspire me to tell their story in a way they wanted it to be told. I hope I have not let any of them down.

The 'D' Company legacy

The scene is set on stage with a backdrop of 'D' Company's roll of honour. The lights are dim except for a spotlight on the backdrop: smoke comes from both sides of the stage and the silence is broken by 'Four Green Fields' being played on a harmonica. At the bottom of the left hand side of the backdrop an old woman is squatting, she is wearing a shawl around her head and shoulders; she is both praying and wailing. She turns to the roll of honour and slowly reads all the names out loud, then turns back and faces the audience; as she does so the smoke is getting thicker and the lament getting louder, stopping abruptly as an I.R.A. volunteer walks on stage coming from the right hand side, the volunteer is CHARLIE HUGHES; he is in I.R.A. uniform. The scene now begins.

O.W. stands for OLD WOMAN and C.H. for CHARLIE HUGHES.

O.W. And who are you sir dressed in that noble uniform? You remind me so of six brave soldiers I once knew, tell me quickly sir, who are you and why have you come here?

C.H. Like yourself, OLD WOMAN, I've come to admire this monument built to honour the memory of brave soldiers: to sit quietly and remember.

OW. .Tell me sir, who do you remember most fondly; and how did they die?

C.H. OLD WOMAN you speak first and tell me the story of the six you just mentioned.

O.W. There was NED TRODDEN and SEAN O CARROLL they were both murdered in 1920, SEAN was the first Officer in command of your 'D' company; then SEAN Mc CARTNEY and JOE Mc KELVEY were murdered in 1922 – JOE was murdered by our own countrymen (sighs deeply) and then in 1942 both JOE MALONE and TERENCE PERRY died in Parkhurst Jail. It is important that we understand the past; this is why they all must be remembered; and now that their names are engraved in stone, none can forget, but it is still a duty for those left behind to write about these brave

men, otherwise they may not be recognised for the brave deeds they did for love of Ireland. Now, tell me your story and about whom you came here to remember?

C.H.. OLD WOMAN, I know well about all those brave men you spoke of, my father often told me how they died, his own brother OWEN was murdered in the 1920's by the loyalists mobs that roamed the streets of Belfast shooting and burning doing England's dirty work for her! My father helped keep the flame of freedom alive, he passed it's burning light onto me and others and I kept it alive and passed it onto other men in turn, some younger but none braver than any man or woman who lived and died to keep Ireland's flame for freedom from ever being extinguished!. I am humbled by the fact that my name is written with the rest.

O.W. Tell me more, young man, what did you do and how is your name carved on this piece of beautiful Irish granite?

C.H. Well OLD WOMAN I'll tell you what I can; there doesn't seem to be a particular moment that I can recall to begin to tell of 'our season' in the story of the fight for Ireland's freedom; so I'll begin where all great and good and noble causes begin; (pause) from the heart. (they both smile at one another)

O.W. All good and bad come from within the heart; so a people united in all that's good from the heart, are a people that can't be destroyed; a united heart therefore, is a beautiful place to begin.

C.H. So that's where I'll begin the story, at the heart of our people, the Falls Road was always called 'the heart of Belfast' and this was why: because the people of the Falls were metaphorically 'the beating heart of nationalism and the manifestation of republicanism'! (slight pause) Have you ever heard of the Falls curfew? (he laughs – slight pause) it was like the miracle of the loaves and fishes; we ended up with a lot more than we started out with in every sense of the word; but of course to say that is to cut a long story short, and even that is an understatement! (begins pacing up and down for a few seconds)

Yeah, there were only 12 of us, (laughs) like the 12 apostles, twelve I.R.A. men and nine weapons between us. I prayed hard that night – my prayers must have been answered because when the curfew was broken by all those brave, brave, and beautiful Belfast women, we ended up with more

weapons than we'd had in the first place, (laughs) no, no, it wasn't that the weapons miraculously multiplied (laughs) it was the people who had been holding stuff for the other crowd (Officials) came and gave us what they had, those people knew we would defend them no matter what the cost (slight pause, puts his hands behind his back and paces from one side of the stage to the other while still talking)

then the influx – the queue to join up was amazing, all the young lads – all spontaneous – if they didn't believe the evil and injustice done to our people before the curfew – then the curfew opened their eyes – there were others of course who couldn't join the fight – for whatever reason (looks at audience for a moment) but let us not be too harsh in our judgment of them! (paces across the stage and then goes to Roll of Honour and silently reads each name – then he turns to the old woman before saying each name) Brave and good men, and there were so many others besides, and whose names may never be written in stone but will always be kept in the hearts of a people who loved them and who will never forget them. (pause) I watched it all – I prayed, I did vigil – as each in turn when they arrived did the same – we became the stand-bys – we stood by in prayer – we pleaded and begged – but what was to be – as they say, is history.

(he begins to call each name and talks for a moment about them; as he speaks – the volunteer in question walks on stage in uniform and brings himself to attention and then at ease)

O.W. Did you know each one?

C.H. In my heart I knew each and every volunteer!

O.W. What better way is there to know another!

C.H. (walks up to Roll of Honour and leans his hand on the side as he calls each name) JIMMY QUIGLEY.

(volunteer walks on stage from right to left brings himself to attention then to at ease – picture of Jimmy is put on board – on floor at side of stage)

JIMMY was an 18 year old school boy studying for his 'A' levels – the boy – and yet the soldier – the scholar – I remember JIMMY during the curfew – he was so eager – he was part of the Fíanna who got most of the weapons safely away (silence) I watched as he lay in wait – in the upstairs room of Cauldfields Chemist shop, positioning himself at the window waiting for the

brit patrol – they watched him from the flats in Milford Row – it was a Friday afternoon, the 29 September the year of '72.

O.W. (speaks quickly) Who watched him – who –

C.H. The brits – they were also lying in wait – (pause) his comrades were also waiting back at the call house for him to return.

O.W. And who were his comrades waiting on his return.

C.H. They were all from 'D' company, like all the other dedicated people whose names may never be known because they were not killed on active service but are forever remembered with gratitude in the heart of Ireland.. Anyway – young JIMMY – he didn't see the shot coming – (slight pause) afterwards when they (brits) moved in and dropped his body out through the window down onto the street – well – JIMMY and I stood together and watched – (slight pause) they were yelling and screaming like men possessed – then a few minutes later as we watched – our comrades shot dead one of them, Private IAN BURT –

O.W. IAN BURT – now who was IAN BURT – I don't know that name –

C.H. No – old woman – not many do remember the name – he was an 18 year old soldier from the Royal Anglian's – he came and stood with us – (slight pause) and watched. The gun battle that followed was intense; MUNDO – (O.W. cuts in)

O.W. MUNDO – who's MUNDO?

C.H. He was one of the bravest, his proper name was EDDIE – EDDIE O RAWE, (slight pause) MUNDO operated from the corner of Sultan Street just off Albert Street, firing over at the sentry post in Norththumberland Street; he had at least 9 hits with a Garand rifle – but they were never claimed by the brits; in between the firing he was shouting across to the O.C. who was in position at the other corner; another great operator; and in between all that was going on MUNDO kept thinking about another 2 comrades who were both killed in an operation the month before in the next street to the brit post in North Howard Street, MUNDO knew them well, they were from the 'Murph', ANNE PARKER and MICHAEL CLARKE; he couldn't have known, but both ANNE and MICHAEL were standing behind him, watching. Then further up in Ross Street the gun battle raged on and

PATRICIA Mc KAY a company adjutant in the Official I.R.A. was also on active service that Friday, PATRICIA was shot five times by the brits and died shortly afterwards in hospital, PATRICIA was a young married woman who fought and died bravely for her country. The gun battle was intense and it roared on and on, BRYSON was down from the 'Murph', he brought with him the old Brit Luis machine gun, his target was the Conway Mill, the brits had taken up position there on top where they had a bird's eye view of the Falls. (slight pause) At JIMMY'S funeral it was the first time the Armalite was used to give the final salute, it was a four man salute! The firing party were honoured to give that salute for the first time.

O.W. What about JIMMY'S family How are they?

C.H. They're still grieving. (CHARLIE stands to attention and salutes volunteer; he does the same with each volunteer throughout; he now moves on to DANIEL McAREAVEYS name) DANIEL Mc AREAVEY, (pause – an I.R.A volunteer walks onto stage – brings himself to attention then at ease – picture of DANNY comes up on board) 21 – that's what age DANNY was – he'd so many dreams he wanted to fulfil – so many things he planned to do with his life – everything had its priority in DANNY'S life, and the freedom of his country was top of the list. He was a 21 year old volunteer, if it hadn't been for the war here DANNY would have been 51 last month on the 16th May. He died in action just a week after JIMMY, he was armed with an armalite and was covering a bombing operation which had just taken place in Raglan Street, DANNY opened up and was hit by a return fire – he lay wounded and because of heavy brit presence his comrades couldn't get near his body so he lay unaided for a while – then the brits pulled up in a Saracen and fired shots into DANNY at point blank range – 'finishing him off' afterwards they dumped his dead body into the back of the Saracen and brought it to their base in Mulhouse Street (pause) DANNY stood in the back of the Saracen and listened to their cheers (pause) he understood everything! These soldiers were on their masters' payroll!

O.W. As he lay after being shot the first time, did he feel much pain?

C.H. No – he didn't feel a thing! I was there with him – holding his hand!

O.W. (leans forward and begins to rock to and fro) I see there are another 3 names 4 days after DANNY, tell me what happened to them!

(Three I.R.A. volunteers walk on stage bringing themselves to attention and then at ease as pictures of the 3 come up on board)

C.H. PADDY, JOHN, JOE. (pause) PADDY MAGUIRE was the bar man, he was also an artist and he loved to sketch – he could look at a garden, a room or any size of space, large or small and right away he formed ideas as to how he could design it – transform it – everything he did he did to perfection. An easy going fella was PADDY, easy to talk to, people often confided in PADDY – if he was told something personal – a secret – it never went any further (slight laugh) you know, he even went by another surname PATRICK PENDLETON so his mother wouldn't be upset by house raids or anything – you know in case he was ever arrested; in fact very few of his comrades knew his proper name, it was when he was killed that they found out – PADDY was one of our top E.O's –explosives officer! He was an expert in his field – but unfortunately – explosives are unpredictable! It was PADDY'S choice to work with the stuff! He was a brave man so too were his two comrades JOHN and JOE! (slight pause) Then JOHN 'J.D.' that's what they all called him – (slight laugh) his nick name started at school, Raglan Street, St Peters; the old school's gone – a lot of 'D' company's volunteers passed through those school doors – they were schooled on many subjects there – but that old school with all the wisdom that its walls had absorbed, could never have prepared J.D. or any of it's pupils for the conflict that lay ahead; J.D. loved football, a man after my own heart – he loved 'Celtic' (smiles and tips his head) he has an omniscient view of them now! (laughs and slight pause) oh yeah, and he loved his long hair! J.D. was a soldier son of Ireland, but he still had a sense of fashion! (smiles and paces up and down) and then JOE – young JOSEPH Mc KINNEY – 17 years old – just a boy – and he too, like JIMMY – he was a soldier – a warrior – a Fíann – he loved his uncle JOE – 'BINGO CAMPBELL', as he was fondly named by all the shinnners who went in and out of the Sinn Féin centre years later – 3 great and good men; as they made their way down Balkan Street they may have appeared not to have a care in the world – but – they knew the 50-50 chance they were taking and all three thought it worth while – for Ireland. (he puts his head down and the old woman puts her head in hands and again rocks to and fro) All our men had a strong connection with St Peter – they went to St Peter's School – and they worshipped God in St Peter's

chapel – now a Cathedral – and yes – I know what you’re about to ask – old woman – yes St Peter does have the keys to the Kingdom and yes he was there – waiting – to open the gates for us all!

O.W. And did all three comrades get the final salute?

C.H. Yes old woman, all three comrades got ‘the final salute’.(pause as music gets louder for about 30 seconds)

O.W. (starts to rock to and fro – and puts her head in her hands for a moment and then she stands up and says while slowly raising her arm in the air in defiance):

October thou art so cruel a month – with bitter winds that come and go, – making madness of the calm breezes that soothe the mind and tease the soul. You weary bones, chilled already by your bite and punish men for their willingness to fight against an oppressor whose only fame is their might! You make short the days and long the nights; you try to banish every dream that had been nourished by summer’s sun! October, the cruellest blow you lashed us with to pierce ore very souls – was the taking of four comrades, DANIEL, JOHN, PADDY and JOE. Though their parting brought such pain the manner of their going such despair – but like the Phoenix their spirit lives still everywhere – it cries they fought to win. (she sits down and slowly rocks to and fro)

C.H. OLD WOMAN – you sound as though you are part of our own beating heart – your heart – like our own beats loudly)!

O.W. (slight pause) Now MUNDO – I’m eager to hear all about MUNDO –

C.H. (slight laugh, then I.R.A. volunteer walks on stage joining the others, brings himself to attention and at ease – the picture of MUNDO comes up on board) MUNDO – MUNDO – there’s so much about MUNDO it’s hard to know where to begin. When you met MUNDO (says quickly) he was a docker you know! Anyway all this energy oozed from him – and it was contagious – he fascinated me – he could go on and on and on – to me he was like someone who would live forever – he loved people – his mother especially – he’d a great loyalty to ‘family’ and that included cousins, aunts, uncles – in fact you could say that he included almost everyone in the republican movement as ‘family’.

O.W. And what happened MUNDO – how did this brave soldier die?

C.H. Like all the rest – he didn't die – yes – I know the body of MUNDO died – but not his spirit – it was everywhere there was a gun battle against the brits – MUNDO'S spirit was there – watching – shouting – shouting directions that volunteers could only hear with their hearts.

O.W. But what happened – tell me – please –

C.H. MUNDO and his friend SEAN were taking the short cut down the back alley that ran between Garnet Street and Cape Street; they were both stopped and searched by the very brit patrol that actually shot MUNDO dead and wounded his pal SEAN after letting them go; they were photographed being searched (the photo of them being searched flashes up on screen) they were both unarmed and began to run when they heard the brit take aim at their backs; as MUNDO left his body he went and stood beside MAURA and DOROTHY, the two MAGUIRE sisters – they both were standing watching – they too were murdered just yards away at the junction of Cape Street by brits from the 3rd battalion Green Jackets: BEADON, RUDKIN and TAYLOR were their names – MAURA – the elder of the sisters was married with 4 young children; her daughter MARGARET is still fighting for justice – she will succeed! MUNDO was loved by all who knew him; I forgot to mention; he loved the old hurling, he played for the Dwyer's G.A.Club – (slight laugh) he hasn't missed a match in 29 years!

O.W. Oh please stop for a moment – this sadness and pain is all too much for me to take in – in this short time!

C.H. Yes, I understand – all the people from the heart of the Falls had all this and more besides to take in and live through – and yet they've survived – they are a determined community of survivors – a people who cannot be put down – a people who will not allow any power to put them down! (pause and paces for a few seconds as music gets louder and then after about 20 seconds gets lower again – then CHARLIE speaks) PADDY LOUGHRAN – my 'Celtic' mate, (pause) it was PADDY who helped plant the seed in the hearts of others for this garden and monument to be nurtured and to finally become a reality!

O.W. And who's PADDY –

C.H. I'll tell you about my friend PADDY in just a moment, but now I want to tell you about MICHAEL – MICHAEL MARLEY or MICKEY as his friends called him.(an I.R.A. volunteer walks on stage brings himself to attention and to at ease – his picture goes up on the board) He was a good lad – a soldier – a son – a brother, and a friend to all who knew him. In ways he seemed older than his seventeen years, there was a maturity about MICKEY – MICKEY was 13 in '69 when 9 year old PATRICK ROONEY was shot dead by the R.U.C. as he lay in bed in Divis Flats; MICKEY himself was to be shot dead by the Green Jackets 4 years later at Whitehall Row in the same Divis Flats complex. MICKEY would still have been only 13 during the Falls curfew and by the time he celebrated his 15th birthday internment had just begun; those few teenage years he had were spent as a soldier. He was 17 years old and had already served a sentence in St. Pat's for possession of a gun. On the night of his death a nail bomb was thrown at the brits and MICKEY was hit by a hail of bullets as he ran off.(slight pause and then CHARLIE says thoughtfully) As MICHAEL was about to die I thought about a passage from the book of Wisdom:

O.W. Let me quote that passage; I'm sure I know which one it is (slight pause) "The virtuous man, though he die before his time, will find rest. Length of days is not what makes age honourable, nor number of years the true measure of life; understanding, this is man's grey hairs, untarnished life, this is ripe old age." Was I right, young man?

C.H. You seem to know my mind well, OLD WOMAN!

O.W. (begins to wail- and then the sound of her wailing is drowned out by the lament, then gradually the music is lowered) Though my heart is heavy and sore with all this sadness – please tell me all!

C.H. (CHARLIE begins to walk up and down past the volunteers and as he does each brings himself to attention – then as he returns to his original spot they all bring themselves at ease) Now, my dear old friend TEDDY.

O.W. TEDDY – TEDDY who – and what is TEDDY'S story? (I.R.A. volunteer walks on stage, takes up position bringing himself to attention and then at ease – a picture of TEDDY goes up on the board)

(C.H. TEDDY CAMPBELL was one of the finest men I'd ever known. He was a man who reminded me of (smiles) 'SIMEON' you know from the Bible, he was in the temple at the presentation of the child Jesus – SIMEON was there waiting – he waited every day of his life in the temple hoping to see the Messiah before he died. Well TEDDY was like that about a united Ireland. He lived his life in the belief that it would happen and in the hope that it would happen in his life time; come it will; but not in TEDDY'S life time. He was a roofer by trade (slight laugh) he had a baldy spot at the top of his head, so he always wore a cap to cover it (smiles) TEDDY'S expertise in weaponry was passed on to many at the barricades down at Divis in '69, he was both fearless and conscientious. A great role model (slight pause) TEDDY spent a lot of his adult life in prison for the republican cause, he'd got some bad beatings in jail and one particularly savage beating he got in 1972 in cage 6 from the brits wasn't treated in time; eventually when he was given medical attention – he needed 40 stitches to his head wound – he'd lost a lot of blood and was in pain – his health after that deteriorated and eventually in 1974 he was transferred from the Kesh to Musgrave hospital where he died on May 3rd. He was one of the best Q.M's. the Dogs ever had!

O.W. Q.M.- Dogs – young man what are you talking about? –

C.H. (laughing) Q.M. quarter-master, the officer who looks after the dumps – the weapons – the explosives – the ammunition everything, all a company's arsenal – you know what I mean –

O.W. And the Dogs?

C.H. The Dogs – 'D' company – (he laughs) oh I'll explain later – Dogs – (laughs)

O.W. MARTIN SKILLEN – that's a familiar name – tell me about MARTIN SKILLEN! (I.R.A. volunteer walks on stage and brings himself to attention and then to at ease – picture of MARTIN comes up on board)

C.H. MARTIN was shot dead just there across the road where the Sinn Féin office is now, on the corner of Sevastopol Street. He wasn't from 'D' company area, MARTIN was from Turf Lodge; 21 years old and he'd already been interned – he died with an Armalite in his hand; he was unaware that

an undercover brit unit was in hiding in the old Clonard picture house, facing Sevastopol Street; he was a brave man, after he was hit he tried to make his way back up the street and was able to hand his weapon over to a comrade before dying.

O.W. He died on his own then?

.C.H. No – he wasn't on his own, MICHAEL GAUGHAN and myself held MARTIN'S hands until he was ready to go! (music gets louder – then stops completely)

O.W. JOHN KELLY – now that's a name I've heard before! (I.R.A. volunteer walks on stage – brings himself to attention and then at ease)

C.H. You may have heard of other JOHN KELLYs – but OLD WOMAN, I can assure you there was only ever one – his nick name was 'BAP' BAP KELLY.

O.W. Young man you say that with a touch of mischief in your voice – am I right?

C.H. Dear, dear – fine OLD WOMAN, when comrades remember 'BAP' it is not alone for his bravery or his mischief making but for the fun and laughter and joy he brought to all the people he loved – and he loved everyone he knew. I never knew anyone with a heart so big and so full of love. He was a singer – a communicator – he used the gifts God gave him well! When he was imprisoned in the Kesh he would organise all the concerts along with 'CLEAKEY'; the pain of many a broken heart was eased by 'BAP'S' persistence in trying to make everyone a happy camper – 'BAP' and 'CLEAKEY' had this special bonding; before 'CLEAKEY' died 'BAP' and all the other P.O.W's sang to him 'Say hello to the Provo's' 'CLEAKEY' wasn't able to join in the chorus – but he could hear it – he knew they were all there – waiting – 'BAPS' voice over all the rest. If there was a song in a heart – 'BAP' was a man who could hear it long before anyone else would recognise it was there! The only pain 'BAP' and his comrade JOHN STONE felt that 21st night in January 1975 was the pain for their beloved families.

O.W. And does 'BAP' still get to sing?

C.H. Some mornings at dawn, when a new day is born, if you listen carefully to the birds sing and call to one another from tree to tree, you can be sure that somewhere amid the chorus 'BAP' KELLY will be whistling his heart out!

(CHARLIE walks over to the roll of honour and runs his hand across it as if to check that he hasn't left any name out – then he come to BILLY CARSON'S name – I.R.A volunteer then walks out on to stage, brings himself to attention and then to at ease as CHARLIE stops and says out loud)

C.H. BILLY – BILLY CARSON. BILLY was one of the longest serving volunteers – he had outlived many of his close comrades who he had operated along side over the years – men like MUNDO – DANNY – BAP; there was a kind of lucky streak that was about BILLY. He was always self assured, he believed in himself. Others believed in him too. There was like an irony about BILLY'S death. He'd always felt that his luck would run out and that he'd be killed on active service, the last place he would have ever have expected to die was in his own home. BILLY and BAP were a great team; everyone knows about the time in '74 when they both engaged in a three hour battle against the brits just across the road there in Sevastopol Street. (he looks at the old woman and picking up a flower from the stage floor he goes over and gives it to her – she takes it and smiles, he then says) do you know what happened? (she nods her head – he smiles) Well the whole of Belfast was going wild, the kesh was on fire, there were attacks on the brits all over, in the Falls there were a lot of brit casualties, one incident happened there at the corner of Sevastopol – BILLY and BAP where positioned there (points over to the left) just at the top of Leeson Street, well the whole back-up brit squad – Saracens – the lot – anyway they were on a rescue mission, trying to get their injured away – but BILLY and BAP kept them at bay for about three hours – with their hand grenades and sniper fire – they had the brits hemmed in. They had no fear. If I were to call the four, MUNDO, BILLY, DANNY and BAP a name that would suit them all I would call them 'the amigos'. (CHARLIE walks over to the Volunteers and stands beside BILLY)

O.W. I see there are but two names left on the roll of honour and they both died on the same day; did they die together?

C.H. Yes old woman there are but two names that remain on the roll of honour that the eye can see, but there are hundreds more from the 'D' company area that only the heart can see! But now you want to know about

the last two names; the first of the two is my dear dear friend PADDY LOUGHRAN, (I.R.A. volunteer walks on stage and brings himself to attention and then to at ease) PADDY loved the Falls Road ; he loved Celtic, he loved the Republican Movement – and most of all he loved his family! Everything he needed in life was on the Falls Road. PADDY was a man who was content with what he had, he knew he was blessed and he appreciated it. He was a good man who never changed. You know OLD WOMAN it was PADDY who pioneered the whole idea of this memorial garden, he helped form the committee and was an inspirational force behind it – even after his death. He formed a band and called it after me – so people would remember me – he was a thoughtful man. He worked on the door of the Sínn Féin centre just over there at the corner of Sevastopol Street,(he points his finger over to the left) PADDY was a great ambassador for Sínn Féin, he was the first person a visitor would make contact with and PADDY treated everyone the same and with respect, he was king in his own home and was loved by his family. He was a lucky man was PADDY. (slight pause) He was aware of the risk involved doing the door in the Sínn Fein centre; but PADDY thought nothing of that; for all those nine years in summer's heat and winter's chill' PADDY stood there at that door, greeting those who called and protecting those working inside; no easy task to undertake daily and cheerfully! (slight pause) And then PAT – PAT Mc BRIDE – (I.R.A. volunteer walks onto stage brings himself to attention and to at ease) PAT spent years in the H.Blocks. He endured so many beatings and still his spirit kept going, he wouldn't give up he couldn't be defeated! and that was PAT. PAT was adopted by JOHN and MARY years before when PAT was only 15. JOHN and MARY loved PAT and so did the rest of their family, MALACHY, LINDA, JOANNE and CATHY and then he met and fell in love with BERNIE and they had a son PATRICK Og. PAT had plans for their future, but when the R.U.C. failed to hold ALLEN MOORE who was obviously in need of psychiatric help, PADDY and PAT'S fate were sealed. (slight pause) PAT and PADDY, BILLY,BAP,MARTIN,TEDDY, MICHAEL, MUNDO, JOESPH, JOHN, PADDY, DANNY and JAMES and TERENCE, JOE and JOE and SEAN and SEAN and NED; I salute you all.

O.W. Now young man – though my heart is sore with pain after hearing all these brave men's stories, my heart feels like it's bursting also with pride –

they were all good and noble and brave men and they were all soldiers of Ireland – but still there is one thing left to complete the story of ‘D’ company – and that is your part in the story – tell me – if humility allows you! You must have been one of their leaders – I can tell by the way you speak caringly about each one; now young man, please tell me your story.

(smoke fills stage and I.R.A. volunteer JOE Mc KELVEY marches on in full 20’s uniform – he stands in front of other volunteers and brings himself to attention and then at ease – he turns slightly towards OLD WOMAN and begins)

J. Mc. K. OLD WOMAN I, JOE MC KELVEY have the honour of telling this man’s story. This great man is CHARLIE HUGHES – O.C. of ‘D’ company – Belfast Brigade from 1969 until his death on the 8th March 1971. With PHIL (oh PHIL’S very much alive) and the others, he held the enemy at bay on many occasions – one of the finest examples of his militaristic planning and coordination was in February ’71; CHARLIE involved every volunteer from ‘D’ company (turns round to audience for a few seconds and says) I can see the sons and daughters of some of the brave volunteers who took part in this operation – and I can even see some of their grand-children here as well – it’s so good to see the example of the fathers and mothers being followed by their children and their children’s children! (turns back towards O.W.) The operation was an assault on Albert Street army billet and the corporation yard beside it. In all there were 12 bombs and 10 weapons. When the brit army convoy disembarked in the corporation yard they were attacked with the systematic throwing of the 12 bombs – the patrols all dispersed running out into Albert Street where they were ambushed by the 10 volunteers who had already taken up positions in the street. The volunteers by this stage of the war were all fully trained with both the rifle and sub-machine gun – and so not a single round of ammunition was wasted! The scene was one of devastation as the British were taken by surprise – there were many casualties and some fatalities – which were never reported in the media – it was early days for the British army at this stage of the conflict here and they desperately needed to keep morale at a high level among their many young recruits. As far as the I.R.A were concerned the operation was a complete success – there were no casualties and no weapons were lost. I could go on further – but – why –

(slight pause) there is no need – CHARLIE was a soldier – a leader – (JOE walks over to CHARLIE and stands at his side) CHARLIE and I have much in common, we both had the honour of being O.C. to ‘D’ company, Belfast Brigade – and we both died in a similar manner – which was to the shame of the Irish Nation. I and my three comrades, Rory, Liam and Dick were taken out and shot by our fellow country men on 8th December 1923 during the civil war. CHARLIE was also murdered by our fellow country men – acts that to this day saddens every Irish heart (slight pause) but let us remember what is good and noble and brave and unselfish in our people. (loudly) I and every man here is proud to have served our country through the ranks of ‘D’ company 2nd Battalion Belfast Brigade I.R.A. (then music ‘Say hello to the Provos’ is played

Loudly as ‘JOE’ calls all volunteers to attention, they march off stage – stage is filled with smoke)

I was commissioned by The ‘81 Committee in Andersonstown in 2006 to write something for their annual commemoration for the dead I.R.A. volunteers from the 1st Battalion Belfast Brigade. I took the first monologue from my earlier play ‘Cease-Fire’, because it was about Sean Mc Dermott, an I.R.A. volunteer from the 1st Battalion and developed it into this full length play ‘DEATH OF AN I.R.A. VOLUNTEER.

DEATH OF AN I.R.A. VOLUNTEER

Cast:

Marian

Sean

RUC Reservist

Brit

Bus Driver

Sound: VOICE OVERS:

News Reader: reporting I.R.A. statement and Sean’s death

British soldier on stairs

Kieran Doherty on stairs

Music: Plai sir d’ a mour by Joan Baez –

The West’s Awake play on mandolin.

Interview given for Rte radio in 1976 by Sean Mc Dermott (recording couldn't be traced)

Stage settings: 'A' and 'B'. A is the larger part of stage; it is a bedroom with bed, chest of drawers with mirror on top and door to the left of stage. B is smaller setting, it has a chair and small table with radio, framed photo of Sean and bottle of wine.

Scene begins in darkness with lights slowly lighting on 'B' as verse of Plar sir d' a mour is playing. (Joan Baez)

And now he's gone like a dream that fades into dawn

but the words stay locked in my heartstring my love loved me.

MARIAN is sitting with glass of wine and is sipping slowly. As the song ends a news report comes on radio; it is just past midnight (news begins with news alert sound)

V/O

At midnight tonight the I.R.A. announced its cease-fire. The statement was sent to the BBC, it reads: "Recognising the potential of the current situation and in order to enhance the democratic peace process and underline our definitive commitment to its success, the leadership of Oglai gh na hÉireann have decided that as of midnight, Wednesday, 31 August, there will be a complete cessation of military operations. All our units have been instructed accordingly. At this historic crossroads the leadership of Oglai gh na hÉireann salutes and commends our Volunteers, other activists, our supporters and the political prisoners who have sustained this struggle against all odds for the past 25 years. Your courage, determination and sacrifices have demonstrated that the spirit of freedom and the desire for peace based on a just and lasting settlement cannot be crushed. We remember all those who have died for Irish freedom and we reiterate our commitment to our republican objectives. Our struggle has seen many gains and advances made by nationalists and for the democratic position. We believe that an opportunity to create a just and lasting settlement has been created. We are therefore entering into a new situation in a spirit of determination and confidence: determined that the injustices which created the conflict will be removed and confident in the strength and justice of our struggle to achieve this. We note that the Downing Street Declaration is not

a solution, nor was it presented as such by its authors. A solution will only be found as a result of inclusive negotiations. Others, not least the British government, have a duty to face up to their responsibilities. It is our desire to significantly contribute to the creation of a climate which will encourage this. We urge everyone to approach this new situation with energy, determination and patience Signed P O Neill. We hope to have a full report on reaction from

VOICE FADING OUT

all the political parties for a special prog—(radio dies out) ———

MARIAN TURNS RADIO OFF

MARIAN (looking at audience) And now – he's gone (pause and says in a soft voice) 18 years. (Smiling) SEAN was – skinny, tall, dark, scruffy and – beautiful. I felt I knew the soul of the man, I recognised the quiet beauty that lay there within that soul waiting – just waiting – to be discovered. SEAN was shy and easily embarrassed, (Looking directly at audience) not the type of person anyone who believes what the papers say would expect to find in the ranks of the I.R.A. (Pause) but life is strange like that

(PAUSE – THEN CONTINUES)

isn't it? Really – (pause) when you start to think about it. I suppose it would be sort of like Catholics from West Belfast – being omniscient, yes that's the word –omniscient – for a day and – seeing into the heart and home – of the Reverend IAN – and seeing that he is really a good and loving husband (afterthought) and father. Few people really know the real person of someone who has an image or reputation to uphold, (pause) well I believe that anyway.

(TAKES A SIP OF WINE – DOOR BANGS LOUDLY)

LIGHTS GO DIM ON MARIAN AND LIGHT UP ON BEDROOM. LADY WHOSE HOME SEAN WAS TAKEN TO AFTER HE WAS SHOT IN GROIN IN 1972 IS SITTING ON ROCKING CHAIR TELLING ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED WHEN SEAN WAS CARRIED INTO HER HOME: DOOR CREEKS OPEN LOUDLY

MARIAN continued:

Then – it was like a twist of fate, SEAN was shot on two occasions – 1972 and 1976 – in '72 he was shot round at Derin Pass by the brits – 13th May – how could anyone forget that day – it was a Saturday – Kelly's Bar up the Whiterock had been bombed earlier by loyalists – so there was activity all over Belfast – gun battles in Ballymurphy – 4 people were killed 2 of them brits – anyway SEAN was returning from Ballymurphy when the car he was in was spotted by brits they gave chase and fired into the back of the car hitting SEAN 5 times; the car crashed in Benraw Road with everyone in the car running in different directions, SEAN stumbled across the road – he was in a bad way having lost a lot of blood – a Cumann na mBan girl called THERESA from Commedagh Drive and her friend ran out of cover and helped lift SEAN to a house near by – he was taken care of there with kindness and compassion by the family who lived there and many of his comrades sat with him holding his hand and stroking his brow with fresh linen cloths. Apparently even SEAMUS TWOMEY – Brigade O.C. of Belfast at the time broke ranks and went to be with him – SEAN was never a victim – always humble – he never talked about being shot and almost dying.

DOOR SLAMS LOUDLY

THE WESTS AWAKE IS PLAYED: (OR FOGGY DEW)

SOUND OF SHOTS FIRED – CAR SCREECHING – THEN CRASHING
MARIAN (PUTTING HANDS TO EARS)

I can hear it all again – over and over – the shots (Shooting is heard) – the screeches of the car – (Sound of car screeching) the bang when it hit the lamp post out side Williams' house (Sound of car crashing)

DOOR CREAKING OPEN:

LADY (Holding rosary beads and rocking to and fro) Dear God of Mercy and compassion help the child that lay here wounded and dying in this bed – help him make it. Father in heaven he's only a young lad have mercy on him Lord help him please. This day Lord has just been unbelievable – the only sound now in the house is the sound of my GERALDINE at the washing machine – every piece of bed-linen soaked in SEAN'S blood – I never knew his name – until he lay dying in this bed – I knew them all to see – but never the name of one – they would come every day and have their meetings and some food – sometimes they'd walk in as if they hadn't a care in the world –

other times they came through the back door rushing and panting maybe being chased by the brits – this is a good street with good neighbours – I’d ask no questions – and as you know Lord offer up a prayer to you and your blessed Mother who knows the secrets of every mothers heart. (fidgeting with rosary beads) I can’t say my rosary tonight Lord – I just have to talk this all over with you – I just don’t know where I’m at now – I don’t care if they come and pull the house apart – that doesn’t matter as long as he’s safe. GERALDINE didn’t shed a tear until he was taken out – she sat with him the whole time – all he kept saying when he became conscious was “let me die don’t let the brits get me – if they come just let me die” GERALDINE said it wasn’t even fear that made him say that – it was resistance – JESUS he’s only a child – how can he think like that – (slight pause) they’re all only children – my heart has never been broken the way it’s breaking now – this day can’t be real – that poor man from Riverdale last night – just standing at the barricades – and Kelly’s bar this evening – what else – what’s next – more Bloody Sundays – Lord please please – you have to help us – I’m going to do what I always do Lord – I’m putting everything in your hands – (joins her hands and thinks before speaking) Every night the T.V. reports about Vietnam – the terrible pictures – the children – the prisoners shot dead in the streets after the soldiers pretended they were going to let them go – the soldiers laughing – I always ask ‘how do those poor people survive – how can they live like that’ they don’t live they just exist – they only survive to escape from one obscenity to the next – is that what’s going to happen here Lord? Now at this moment Lord I don’t feel that fear I always had about things – that child – that young boy – SEAN – he’s more of a man than I’ve ever seen – he’d no fear in him – it was like – if this is the way I’m to go – then so be it – (slight pause) this house will never be the same Lord – we were witnesses to something so great and powerful that it was beyond our comprehension; that this young man – SEAN Mc DERMOTT – was prepared to die for what he believed in
(pause and change of mood followed by low music – foggy dew – briefly the sound of a helicopter outside)

Continued:

Listen to that helicopter Lord – no wonder I can’t concentrate on my prayers – in case I forget Lord – I pray for the doctor who removed two of the bullets

from SEAN tonight and the priest who did his job in a fashion that reflects your love and compassion – I pray your blessing on them and may more like them continue to do your will. I pray for SEAN and all his comrades – please help and guide them to a peaceful Ireland Lord where no child will ever again have to take up a gun to fight the oppressor – Lord turn England's heart of stone to a heart that understands the cries of a people oppressed – Lord could you even whisper into WILLIE WHITELOW'S ear and ask him to be man enough to make a difference over here- now he's got that power over here – please – please help all Ireland's children wherever they may be – to love the land where they were born – and to use their love to bring about a change that will bring about peace and justice for all. Lord – hear my prayer.

SHE TURNS SLIGHTLY AND LOOKS AT THE BED AND REACHES OVER TO PULL THE BLOODIED SHEET TO HER LAP: MUSIC:

My GERALDINE Lord – my poor heart is still burning with love for her – I watched and listened to her tonight – she soothed her 4 children downstairs – left them happy and completely unaware of what was going on upstairs – even with all the noise that was filtering down – she took charge – she was more beautiful tonight than I'd ever seen her – my heart is overwhelmed with pride in my GERALDINE – please stay with her Lord and help her always – let life be kind to her – and her children.

STARTS ROCKING TO AND FRO:

CONTINUES;

Lord – just a last thought – if that child – if SEAN – if he pulls through – I'll know you must have something special for him to do!

CONTINUES ROCKING AS LIGHT IN BEDROOM GOES OUT: MUSIC FOR ABOUT 30 SECONDS: LIGHTS BACK ON MARIAN

MARIAN I remember the first time I saw SEAN – it was like the song says, (sings) 'your eyes kissed mine, I saw the love in them shine, you brought me heaven right then, (slight pause) when' (stops abruptly pause) it was love at first sight (smiling) on SEAN'S part – he told me that later – even though it was only a photo – he said from that moment he wanted to get to know me – and when I read his letters I wanted to get to know him – but I wasn't in love with SEAN, oh yeah (pause) I did love him – I loved everything about

him – but I wasn't in love – I wanted to be in love with SEAN but it just didn't happen – I loved his mind – his spirit – I think everyone who knew him loved that intellectual brain of his – we mightn't have always understood what was in it at times – but we knew enough to know (says softly) we loved it – (deep sighs) I only ever saw SEAN dressed up once – I t was on a Thursday night – (smiles to herself) all the do's in the Briar were always on a Thursday night. 1975 I think it was – the do was for the prisoners' welfare – for a mini-bus- (change of mood) how the families travelled in some of those old mini-buses – I don't know, I thought I was going to take a heart attack the once I went up in one – we were stopped by the brits and taken off the bus and searched – it was freezing cold – yeah it was so cold

(MARIAN THEN BEGINS TO THINK BACK TO HER FIRST JOURNEY TO LONG KESH TO SEE SEAN)

BRITISH SOLDIER STANDING AT CHECK-POINT WAITING FOR MINI-BUS CARRYING VISITORS TO LONG KESH STANDING JUST OFF THE FRONT OF STAGE CHECKING SOMETHING IN HIS REPORT SHEET BEFORE MINI-BUS ARRIVES:

(GETS CALL THROUGH 2 WAY RADIO FROM HQ TELLING HIM THE MINI-BUS IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER – BUS PULLS UP AND DRIVER JUMPS OUT AND STARTS SHOUTING INTO BRIT'S FACE)

BUS/DR (shouting) Look mate I'm sick of this

BRIT Could you be more explicit and tell me what exactly are you sick of – we'll start with your name – what's your name and date of birth –

BUS/DR My name hasn't changed from half an hour ago when you stopped me and NELLY in this same spot –

BRIT Tell me Mr mini-bus driver who is NELLY – there was no one with that name 45 minutes ago – tell me Mr mini-bus driver were you concealing someone in the mini-bus that you shouldn't have been – I'll have your little mini-bus pulled apart if you don't answer the question promptly.

BUS/DR Promptly – why promptly – you in a hurry now mate – cus these people (pointing to stage) are all in a hurry – your stupid questions are keeping us back – it's a cold day – there's kids in that bus – they're sitting freezing – and you're keeping us back –

(BRIT TURNS SLIGHTLY AND SPEAKS THROUGH A RADIO IN HIS POCKET)

BRIT Alpha to base Alpha to base – our position is check point Charlie – we’ve stopped Sevastopol’s number 2 white eagle – 15 bodies on board – about to search – may need back-up – driver very uncooperative – suspect by name of NELLY on board – Roger 2 – out.

BUS/DR Look Roger – if I tell you who NELLY is will you let us get on with our journey in peace – Roger – these people are freezing – the Kesh is only round the corner and again – I’m beginning to sound like a record – they’ve all the permits and I.D. there’s nobody wanted on this bus – ROG – I’m appealing to your better side – let us go – NOW

BRIT Right then tell NELLY to step forward – NOW

BUS/DR Well that’s a bit hard for her to do – she can roll forward but she can’t step forward –

BRIT Why? Is she a cripple?

BUS/DR Well see for yourself – she big – ish and to some she’s beautiful – she never lets us down – she’s eyes that can light up the darkest of roads and legs that can take you to Portlaoise and back without a hiccup (though you need your plastic bag to throw up in) for once she starts it’s hard to stop her – she doesn’t break easy – but she delivers – get in her way and she roars so loudly that she’ll frighten the you know what out of anybody who tries to stop her. You know her well ROG – you’ve stripped her naked and tried to humiliate her almost everyday for the last month – so I just had to christen her – give her a name like any other woman who suffers from domestic violence – you can’t treat anything so badly and expect it to survive without severe consequences (in a haughty voice) ROG – (pointing to stage) I give you NELLY.

BRIT pause) And I give you – and NELLY another 45 minutes to enjoy this wonderful fresh air while I find out what NELLY wears under her petticoat!

MARIAN continues back to before she started to reminisce:

then the driver couldn’t get it to go again – another bus coming back from the Kesh spotted us and did a return journey so the prisoners didn’t miss out on their visits – and (laughs) as we were coming home the mini bus was still

sitting in the same spot being examined by the same brits – it was probably taken to the mini-bus grave yard after that – that seems like a distant foreign land where that happened – and there was a stench in the air – there was some sort of meat processing factory near by – that was the week before he was released from internment (smiles) and the first time we met. MALACHY – MAL had shown him the photo of me in the Andytown news, and the next thing was he sent me a visit. I'd already heard a lot about SEAN from MAL'S letters. MAL loved him – they were like father and son. (LIFTS PHOTO OF SEAN) I love this photo of us together – his arm around me – strong – comforting it felt so good – I can almost feel it now – anyway (pause) that Thursday night SEAN borrowed his brother's beige jacket (she laughs holding up framed picture) look at those massive lapels – and his brown shirt – he looked really handsome – he was relaxed that night – I wore my midi – it was green with white flowers – (she sighs) I wouldn't dream of wearing green now – it was summer – I didn't wear a jacket. (pause and puts picture down on her knee) If there had been no troubles here – (feeling hurt) oh God – (she sighs deeply) SEAN wanted to be a journalist – he would never have made it (slight laugh) he was too honest – too (sighs) always on the side of the underdog – (softly raises voice mimicking) those violated by politically motivated forces – paid for by governments – no paper would have hired him – though I don't think he would have seen that as a real obstacle (laughs) no that would have reinforced his belief that there was no such thing as the free press – he would have started his own newspaper (she smiles) I can see him now – jeans – army jacket (lifts her head and shakes her hair) long hair (pauses and looks sad) That picture in the paper – no one had ever seen that before – we all thought it was in the morgue – there was no other explanation – his beautiful brown eyes – closed – dead – (pauses) you know I often wonder about when he died – when he was shot – I knew he was an atheist and I know he didn't die right away – KIERAN told me about it afterwards – MAIREAD had been arrested – KIERAN said it was the hardest thing he ever had to do – to go – to leave SEAN – when KIERAN heard the shots he ran up stairs – SEAN ordered him to go. I don't know how long it took for SEAN to die – but I think about it a lot – (puts hands up to face and cries – wipes tears away with hankie) I wonder – I don't know if he had anyone to comfort him – to hold his hand or wipe his

brow – he may even have been abused as he lay bleeding – I often wonder – I wonder – did he call out to God – did he? Was there – a compassionate merciful God there with him in that pool of spirit filled blood, (holds her hands as in prayer raises her voice) did he feel the need to ask – for forgiveness? Or didn't it matter? Even CHRIST cried out as he bled to death, (raises her voice) 'father – why have you forsaken me' (pause) did SEAN feel so alone at that moment – the sound of MARY'S sobs must have given some comfort to CHRIST – perhaps (lowly) someone cried for SEAN somewhere in that room- perhaps.

LIGHTS OUT MUSIC

END OF ACT 1

Act 2

BEFORE MARIAN OPENS BEDROOM DOOR CONVERSATION
BETWEEN BOMB-MAKER, HIS MOTHER AND SEAN IS HEARD:

V/O(WOMAN) (Door bell rings – door opens) Ach son what are you doin here at this time of the mornin – 7 o clock – I'm just about to get him up – where are you two going at this hour – any brits about? I heard them all through the night – they must have been raidin in the next street! (shouts upstairs) 7 o clock SEAN'S here – go on into the kitchen son and I'll make you both a nice fry –

SEAN You're O.K. I had something earlier

WOMAN You are an early riser (water running filling kettle)

COMRADE (COMRADE coming down stairs and into kitchen) O.K.?

SEAN Sound! –

COMRADE Hold on till I grab my shoes – (laughs) this woman keeps my shoes in the back hall – it's a good job the brits didn't raid here last night – or I'd have been dragged out bare foot – can't see them waiting for me to find my shoes – wherever my ma's them hidden!

WOMAN Now now – my darlin son –your wee mammy wouldn't have let them take you in your bare feet – they got away with doing that before – NEVER AGAIN – NEVER!

COMRADE See the way she loves me SEAN –

DOOR CLOSES AS WOMAN LEAVES ROOM

SEAN Well – is everything there –

COMRADE Yeah – everything's there – hold-alls – pegs – everything – the car's round the back of the house – everything's sound – the people didn't stay in the house last night – I've got the key here – so that's about everything – it's just getting in and out of the street's the problem – I've used it before – and the last time the brits put up a road block outside – I just finished priming the thing – it was close – the closest I've ever been – we nearly didn't make it – (slight laugh – door bangs closed)

SEAN That us COMRADE ?

COMRADE Tell them I want both rings brought back –

SEAN That's us – all clear – not a brit in sight –

COM COMRADE Take care – see you later –

SEA SAEN Slan mo Chara

COM COMRADE Amor –

MARIAN walking into bedroom: she moves towards the set of drawers where the gun was kept.

MARIAN I've thought about this a million times – and every time it changes – sometimes he's not dead – sometimes he's still here –(softly almost whispering) but no matter what – his legacy never died – SEAN'S legacy lives on

Music – The west's awake:

(turns slightly looking around room as if for the first time)

Continues:

He was in love when he walked into this room – he'd met DEIRDRE – his new and true love; his soul mate – (slight pause) the first time I entered this room – in my mind that is – mammy came with me – she held my hand – she steadied me – I could never have come to this place if she hadn't accompanied me – she asked if I felt the fear – the violence – I couldn't answer – but when I looked into her eyes I knew that she could feel it; mammy was like that – she could feel things that – that the eye couldn't see

– she knew things about people – that people hid from one another – anyway – then she squeezed my hand and said that she couldn't feel any hate – she reasoned it – because SEAN was in love when he entered the room he must have brought with him – in his heart – some of that love – maybe she was right – I hope she was – she can be a bit religious at times – she even quoted me a piece from the bible “ where there is hate, let me bring love” – she smiled and said – “you know MARIAN – because people are enemies it doesn't always mean there is hatred in the individual – when enemies come face to face – and unless they close their eyes and refuse to look – to really look – then maybe they can see a reflection of themselves looking back into their own eyes” – maybe that happened here (pause) where SEAN made his final statement – he was prepared to die – KIERAN was willing to carry him – he might have survived – like the last time but then again they might both have died together – who knows? Not I – but in his heart he knew this was it. This was the end! (deep sigh)

FOOTSTEPS ARE HEARD COMING UPSTAIRS DOOR OPENS ENTERS RESERVIST WITH BOTH HANDS RAISED IN AIR AND SEAN BEHIND HIM WITH GUN. MARIAN LOOKS ON STANDING AGAINST WALL

SEAN Keep them raised – keep them where I can see them –

RESERVIST O.K. O.K. mate don't panic – they're in front where you can see them – don't panic – I'll do exactly what you tell me – please don't shoot me –

SEAN One false move and you're gone – I'll shoot if I have to –

RESERVIST No – no mate – just – just don't panic – I'll get them now – the keys are in the draw –

(Reservist walks directly to drawer – SEAN is about to close door when he sees uniform hanging on back of door – he is about to warn the others down stairs as reservist takes gun from top drawer and shoots SEAN in stomach)

SEAN (shouts) He's a cop (shots rings out SEAN falls to floor closing door still holding gun as he falls. He immediately returns fire hitting reservist in hand – his gun falls under the bed)

KIERAN (heard running upstairs in panic) What's happened? Who's shot?

KIERAN TRYs TO PUSH OPEN DOOR

SEAN Don't – don't, I'm shot in stomach bleeding badly, disarmed him with return fire – shot him in hand – gun under bed – go – go get out now (speaks with urgency)

KIERAN Not without you – move so I can get in –

KIERAN GENTLY PUSHES DOOR

SEAN I – I can't – go – I'm too bad – I won't make it –

KIERAN I'm not moving from here without you

SEAN I'm bad, I've lost too much blood – go get out now that's an order – I order you – GO-

KIERAN I can't – I can't leave you –

SEAN You're a soldier same as me – (speech slurred) take my chances here – I order you comrade – go – go

KIERAN (in a whisper) Comrade – don't ask me to do this –

SEAN I order you – go – now – that's an order –

KIERAN Mo Chara – (pause) mo chara –

A SOUND OF SOLDIER STANDING TO ATTENTION IS HEARD THEN A GENTLE KNOCK ON DOOR KIERAN SAYS SOFTLY:

KIERAN Slan mo chara

FOOTSTEPS WALKING DOWN STAIRS AND THEN SHOUTING:

KIERAN (Faintly down stairs) No one move – lie face down and don't make any attempt to go up stairs

MARIAN That – must have been SEAN'S loneliest moment. – Because – because he believed in what he was fighting for – really believed – he wouldn't have found that order hard to give – his final order – and KIERAN like SEAN – was a soldier – he obeyed the order to leave – KIERAN and SEAN – were the bravest of the brave (pauses) – there was even a story about KIERAN – told after he died on hunger-strike – it happened not long after SEAN died – KIERAN and others were out on an operation when one of the volunteers was shot, they were in a difficult situation – the comrade

was bleeding badly and KIERAN was the officer in command, he went back at great risk to himself and

lifted the wounded comrade over his shoulder carrying him to safety. The wounded volunteer –he lived to tell the tale – he may even be listening now! (MARIAN still standing with back against left-hand side wall)

RESERVIST You're bad – you've lost a lot of blood – you need to get to the hospital – my doctor lives 2 minutes away – let me call him –

SEAN You move and I'll shoot –

RESERVIST I could overpower you in a flash – if I wanted – I only want to help you – you don't have long to go boy –

SEAN You move and I'll shoot – (groans with pain and takes hankie from his pocket to place on wound)

RESERVIST O.K. I'll do as you say – but you know you don't have long to go – why won't you let me get you help? Your mates are well away now – (long pause) listen –

(SEAN looks over and tries to hold gun steady)

CONTINUE:

what do you hear – it's quiet – there's no sound – downstairs they haven't moved – they're not going to get help – but I can bring you down stairs put you in the car and leave you off at Musgrave – you'll be all right – once they stitch you up!

SEAN Shut up

RESERVIST I'm only trying to – to take your mind off what's happening –

SEAN (loudly) Quiet – (he is finding it hard to hold gun straight)

THE WESTS AWAKE IS SOFTLY PLAYING IN BACKGROUND THEN AFTER A FEW MOMENTS THE SOUND OF SIRENS AND SHOUTING IS HEARD FROM OUTSIDE FOLLOWED BY FOOTSTEPS RUNNING UPSTAIRS.

SEAN (to reservist voice struggling) I'm a soldier of Oglagh Na hÉireann – if you move I'll shoot – tell them not to attempt to open the door or I'll shoot you dead before they get in! You don't tell them I'm shot –

RESERVIST (shouting with nerves in voice) Don't try to come in he has a gun – he's going to shoot me if you do – he's bad – I shot him and he returned fire – I'm hit in the hand I'm here on the floor facing the door – his backs to the door – he's a 45 browning –

AT THAT SEAN MOVES AWAY FROM THE DOOR – ONLY HIS LEG IS ACROSS THE BOTTOM OF THE DOOR. HE KEEPS THE GUN POINTED AT THE RESERVIST STEADYING IT WITH BOTH HANDS.

BRIT V/O Identify yourself – what's your name and rank – we've captured your accomplices – your going to die – what's your name –

SEAN (making an effort not to sound as weak as he really is) I'm a soldier of Oglagh na hÉireann Provisional I.R.A. I'm not surrendering – I'll shoot if you try to come in –

BRIT Tell us your name and we'll get you a priest or something

SEAN I'm a soldier of Oglagh na hÉireann Provisional I.R.A. I'm not surrendering –

BRIT Look – kido – you sound too young to know what you're talking about – throw the gun down and we'll bring your mates in – your girl friend's down stairs – she wants to talk to you –

SEAN I'm a soldier of Oglagh na hÉireann Provisional Irish Republican Army.

BRIT Your two mates ran off and left you – they don't care so why should you care

SEAN As their commanding officer – I ordered my comrades to make their escape – my comrades are brave men – they'll fight on – they'll fight to the end, (tries to pull himself up) they'll fight to the end – to our socialist republic – freed from British rule and misrule by this orange state!

(slight pause then struggles to reaffirm)

I am a soldier of Oglagh na hÉireann Provisional Irish Republican Army – I am not surrendering myself nor my weapon to you!

BRIT Is this man serious – he's bleeding to death and he won't give up! What kind of fool are you? What class of fool joins the I.R.A. knowing that he'll either end up dead – maimed – imprisoned – or his life generally thrown

into turmoil- Is there an answer? I suppose (softly) if you're going to die I have to answer that myself – I've seen this all before – in other places – it's not unique to here in Ireland – there are such fools all over the world – in every country that's divided – only the foolish see themselves as patriots – a patriot – in the proper sense before the word was hijacked by people like you – it was for people like me who fought for King and country – we're the real patriots – I am a patriot – I love my country – I serve my Queen – I'd even die for my Queen – I'd kill for my Queen – maybe we're not so different kido – if I change the word Queen for republic – then it maybe is the same – you understand me better kido – the real difference is of course I'm paid by my Queen for my patriotism – I don't know if I could hack it if I didn't get the dosh – but you – it wouldn't mean the same for you – would it – if you did – I suppose an Ulster patriot is a well paid R.U.C. man (laughs)

RESERVIST (angry) Why are you saying that – that's not the way it is at all – this man would have shot me dead only I shot him first –

(Brit cuts in)

BRIT It's the truth – I want him to know I know the truth – he's going to die – it won't matter because he isn't going to tell anyone – is he? I'm paid for what I do – what about you mate – (sarcastic) you do it for the love of Ulster! Come on tell me another!

RESERVIST He can't have long to go – he's lost too much blood – but he's still pointing the 45 at me – don't mess this up mate –

BRIT Fine then – you stupid stupid fool – if you want to die for Ireland then die – who gives a damn about you – no one will even remember your name never mind what you thought you died for in a few weeks time – (pause) your girl friend out there – do you think she'll join up again after she gets 20 years – I think not – and your other comrades who ran off – they'll be across the border by this time tomorrow evening – drinking pints of Guinness – they'll forget about you and what you've died for in the space of a few months or even weeks! Come on hurry up die – I've a plane to catch – I'm going home tomorrow –

RESERVIST He's almost gone – just a few more minutes –

BRIT Move on him now – NOW!

RESERVIST (attempts to get up) O.K. boy – don't panic –

SEAN (raising gun indicating for reservist to get back down speaking almost inaudibly) You move and I'll shoot (then puts gun back across his chest)

RESERVIST Tell us your name so we can let your family know – (pause) you married? (slight silence) what about a girl friend? You must have someone!

SEAN I'm a volunteer of Oglagh na hEireann – Provisional I.R.A.
(SEAN smiling remembers earlier that day his last words to his girl friend Deirdre)

SEAN V/O (laughter) See you Mc D – (more laughter)

DEIRDRE V/O See you Mc Dermott (laughter)

SEAN What do you see Ms Mc D?

DEIRDRE No, you first Mc Dermott – what do you see?

SEAN I see (slowly) beauty – personified! Now you Mc D – tell me – what you see – in me?

DEIRDRE Mmmm – Mc DERMOTT – in you I see – love – in you I see – (slight pause and sigh) my man – yes my man – who – who wants to set Ireland free – in you I see – Mmmm

SEAN IS FIGHTING TO KEEP HIS HEAD ERECT; A THIN MIST APPEARS OVER THE TOP OF THE ROOM AND SEAN RAISES HIS RIGHT HAND AS IF REACHING FOR SOMEONE AND SAYS:

SEAN LAURA – LAURA! – is that really you Laura –

SEAN SMILES BREATHING HIS LAST WITH ONE ARM OUTSTRETCHED AND THE OTHER HOLDING HIS GUN ACROSS HIS CHEST. HIS EYES CLOSE. A CHORUS OF THE WEST'S AWAKE PLAYS BEFORE MARIAN SPEAKS

MARIAN It's a lonely thing to die alone – a sad thing to look back on – but then he didn't die alone – I like to think all his comrades who died before him stood in this room and waited with him for death to free him from his bondage – from TONY HENDERSON to LAURA CRAWFORD – but also maybe he did find and recognize a humanity in his enemy – maybe he held

SEAN'S hand and wiped his brow or (pause)
maybe not – I never really thought of the reservist as anybody before –
before now this moment to be exact – for SEAN was to die by this man's
hand and alone with him – it's an intimate – a personal thing to be with
someone as they expire – this stranger and SEAN together – and neither
knowing even the other's name; (takes a deep breath) of course – it could
easily have been the other way around – but always in my dreams – it is
from this room that SEAN'S spirit soared to the sky – to freedom – to the
hearts of all who ever loved him – (smiles) back to DEIRDRE who waited for
him – never to return – and also back to a part of me.

AS LIGHTS DIM SLOWLY IN THE BACK-GROUND IS A NEWS BULLETIN:

Radio V/O A man shot dead yesterday on the outskirts of Dunmurry has
been named as 20 year old Provisional I.R.A. man SEAN Mc DERMOTT.
Mc DERMOTT and his three accomplices one a female MAIREAD
FARRELL from Andersonstown were apprehended, they were planting
bombs in the Conway Hotel at Dunmurry. The three men entered a house
attempting to hijack the owner's car. Before being fatally wounded himself
Mc DERMOTT shot an off duty R.U.C. reservist, his injuries are thought not
to be serious. The other two men escaped on foot.

LIGHTS OUT: THEN AN INTERVIEW THAT SEAN DID WITH TWO OTHER
I.R.A. VOLUNTEERS IN 1976 JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH IS PLAYED; IN
IT HE EXPLAINS WHY HE BECAME AN I.R.A. VOLUNTEER.

PART OF GRAVE-SIDE ORATION:

Voice/Over "He was a man of simple but rare qualities. He was a man of
overwhelming integrity –a man who put total faith in the ability of the
ordinary people to rise out of their bondage" (taken from graveside oration)
ENDS WITH MANDALIN PLAYING THE WEST'S AWAKE:

* Laura – Laura Crawford was a member of Cumann na mBan who died on
active service the December before Sean. Tony Henderson was the first
member of the I.R.A. 1st Battalion to die on active service in 1971 aged 21.

Conspiracy is only a phone call Away

ACT ONE.

THIS IS A SATIRICAL LOOK AT WHAT MAY HAVE GONE ON BEHIND
CLOSED DOORS.

TABLE ON STAGE WITH FOUR PROMINENT MEN SEATED AROUND. IN THE BACK GROUND VOICE OVERS OF TWO WOMEN, MAGGIE THATCHER AND STELLA RIMMINGTON (director general of MI5) THE MEN ARE:

HUGH ORDE (CHIEF CONSTABLE PSNI, RECENTLY KNIGHTED)

NIGEL DOODS (RECENTLY ELECTED DUP MLA FOR NORTH BELFAST)

PETER HAIN M.P.(RECENTLY MADE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR N.IRELAND)

SHAUN WOODWARD M.P. (RECENTLY MADE SECURITY MINISTER FOR N.IRELAND)

Men are seated at a table in middle of stage and to the left is a slim-line table with a basin of water and a hand towel on top; Hain is a motor sports enthusiast and is playing with a car on top of table.

Dodds is writing a poem to his boss in the DUP.

Woodward is looking at himself making gestures in a hand held mirror.

Orde is watching them all and picking his nails.

The phone rings unheard by men and the scene begins with phone conversation between Maggie and Stella.

MAGGIE Hello this is MARGARET THATCHER. Is STELLA available?

STELLA MARGARET, (sarcastically) my dear dear MARGARET, the face that launched a thousand ships.

MAGGIE I see you haven't lost your humors my dear!

STELLA The world's a stage MARGARET dear, and you and I know that well, as a matter of fact that was quoted by none other than one PETER HAIN quite recently.

MAGGIE Yes but in his case the world stage ruled by New Labour is a pantomime; not played out by our own cast of Shakespearian professionals; instead, TONY has let the silly clowns from the province of Ulster. (Silly giggling by both women) play the leading roles. Silly silly Billies!

STELLA Just a cast of stoogies – as they say – over there

MAGGIE Yes, but to get to my point STELLA dear, I'm calling about that meeting

STELLA What meeting would that be, MARGARET dear –

MAGGIE STELLA (rather sternly) when I left 10 Downing St, I didn't cease being Prime Minister, as you know, my boy my prodigy; not, prodigal, listened well to his Iron Lady; so STELLA dear, I expect it's the same with you, you still exert influence to a lesser extent perhaps than I did, but still, you know what's going on, and I want to know what's going on at that meeting today, I want Martin McGuinness's head on a plate and not one of the disciples!

STELLA I understand your concern MARGARET dear, by the way how's MARK

MAGGIE Fine, MARK'S doing fine – costing me a lot; but as I say doing fine; of course I can't help feel that if you'd still been in place – oh well –

STELLA They tell me it's not quiet as simple as the Pinochets'. Will he go on hunger-strike do you think?

MAGGIE I didn't think you were such a bitch, STELLA, you surprise me!

STELLA I may surprise you MARGARET dear, but I'm sure I delight you! You know you were always my role-model!

MAGGIE Bitchiness, revenge, they're all part of the office tool box; kept in the filing cabinet and taken out when needed; remember; intelligence gathering is not an exact science, but more an art, so my dear Dame, you've been well honoured for your artistic talents, 'The Artists Perspective' I admire anyone who can paint their own picture of any situation and sell it to the masses! STELLA dear, I now, over this untapped phone confer on you, my trusted servant, the title of 'Old Master' you've served Britain – Our country well! I'm not so sure about Ms ELIZA MANNINGHAM-BULLER – or Bullerdog as I'm informed some prefer to call her; but STELLA dear, I don't like that inference – her bite should be worse than her bark – she obviously hadn't you in mind when it came to taking on a role model. Anyway forget all that and tell me 'that meeting' is it over yet?

STELLA MARGARET dear, sorry, how could I not tell you, especially as we're speaking through an unbugged phone! You know everything MARGARET dear – and obviously what you don't know I can possibly tell you – MARGARET dear, the meeting hasn't ended yet – but the decision, as it stands is, NO, you can't have McGuinness's head on a plate, the DUP have insisted that 'SEAN KELLY', their latest hate figure – since his early release -his is the only head that will satisfy Orangism or to spell it correctly U N I O N I S M OR DUP ISM.

MAGGIE So what has this KELLY person been up to – drugs and counterfeit rackets, brothels and money laundering – I hope his family aren't going to move over here –

STELLA Well actually MARGARET (slight laugh) what this KELLY person has been up to is all quite legal – what he's guilty of is the indefensible – he's been trying to keep the peace – during all those protests up in his home area of 'The Ardoyne'. One still wonders at the annoyance to the locals because of the prefix 'The' when reporting on or from Ardoyne – it came about when our media people were being briefed by the army. Apparently the locals are very clannish and have a high level of pride in their Ardoyne! Ungrateful really – a bit like 'London' being thrown back in our faces by those nationalists in Derry! Between you and me MARGARET – this arrest is nothing to do with security – it's – well things haven't changed at all – it's to appease those bullies in the D.U.P. It's KELLY they want, so HAIN is doing exactly what JOHN and yourself MARGARET dear did in the past. Oh I'm not comparing your motivation with JOHN'S MARGARET, we're all agreed that you were driven by, shall I put it politely – by passion – possibly with a large dash of hatred – revenge perhaps – unlike JOHN, his appeasement to the Unionists was a case of desperation – he needed them to stay in power – (slight laugh)

MAGGIE So what are they doing – oh don't tell me – I can just picture them all – DUP sitting picking their noses, HUGH ORDE playing with a model police car, WOODWARD pretending to write something sensible and HAIN looking at himself in a mirror and asking it who's the fairest of them all. I know them all – I may not have met them all personally but I know them all! Nothing ever changes unless you make it, and in Ulster nothing has

changed except on the Sinn Féin I.R.A. side. But the more they try the harder we make it for them! Right STELLA!

STELLA Right MARGARET dear, from day one, when we knew that a cease-fire was inevitable, we sat around the table, our team, or what was left of them after the Accident – we sat with those Willies from the N.I.O. and we swore that Sinn Féin I.R.A. would never be accepted; and all these years on, MARGARET, we've kept our word! And by golly we intend to keep it – should Ireland sink as predicted under the sea – we'll still keep our word – No I.R.A. in government. How's that for an encore, MARGARET dear.

MAGGIE Music, wonderful music to my ears. Ring me when the meeting's over – don't email – or fax – the people MARK was trying to help have them bugged!

DODDS (LOOKING AT ORDE) Would you mind not doing that, it's disgusting, a grown man sitting picking his nose in public! I find it quite nauseating!

ORDE Well, it beats constant verbal diarrhoea in public, most of us find that quite nauseating! Especially when it's taken for granted by your party that we should all want to be on the same diet; or as your boss would metaphorically explain it, we should all be singing from the same hymn-sheet!

DODDS Don't talk rubbish – you're beginning to sound like republican I.R.A. Sinn Féin.

W'W Now, now, boys (moving mirror in different angles as he speaks and watches himself) that's not what we're here for to day, you know we're here to sort out this problem, which is (puts down mirror and looks at everyone, DODDS and ORDE look back at him but HAIN is obsessed with his little car he's racing on top of table and making noises as a child would while playing at car racing) Hands up anybody who can give me the correct answer (silence) all right then , we need a few ice-breakers first! NIGEL, you seem a nice sort of fellow, tell me about yourself.

DODDS What like, what is it you don't already know about me?

W'W Well, for example, I believe you're a very talented barrister –

DODDS That's right, I am a very talented barrister, I would be earning much more money if I'd stayed at the bar, and my wife stayed at home. Things in the political game are so mean that my poor wife has to work to subsidise the family income!

W'W Tell us NIGEL, while you were cutting your political teeth, is there a case in mind that you would have loved to have taken on – who would you have found challenging enough to have defended?

DODDS Well, I don't know about a sense of defending a particular case while cutting my 'political teeth' but I can remember while cutting my wisdom teeth, a case I would have given my eyeteeth to defend!

W'Worth We are intrigued – pray tell us – give us an insight into the fellow you are!

DODDS I don't know if I like the way that was put, but nevertheless, I'll tell you. Though in the early '70's I was only a young buck, not even a novice, but I remember having a dream that I was defending my leader, of course he wasn't my leader then because the DUP hadn't been formed at the time, but, to cut a long story short, I'd always had this admiration for the man 'Big IAN' since I'd first heard him on television, and then when I heard him in real life; he just blew my mind away, I wanted to be like him. However, about this dream I had about defending him, it was magic, people were blaming him; in my dream of course; of being the force which drove the whole situation here to erupt; and just because he's a gifted speaker; always taken up the wrong way and of course out of context;

STANDS UP AND PUTS HIS HANDS ON THE LAPELS OF HIS JACKET
AS IF HE'S IN COURT:

Continues:

Anyway there was this fellow by the name of McCLEAN, a real weakling, he had to blame someone for his mistakes, and it came to pass that he would blame Dr PAISLEY, and some small-minded people too blamed Dr PAISLEY of inciting hatred; which incidentally led to the murder of a Protestant woman and some innocent Roman Catholics in the mid sixties; but of course it was all just hearsay, or so they say. The reality was, however, that this inspirational example of manhood, my now good friend and leader, whose

shoes one day I hope to fill, was then as he is now a man of such good character, that thousands, one cold dark night, followed him up a hill and as we all know, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery and so from that dark cold hill, returning to the bottom the multitude wore what my leader wore, bright red berets. Now that confirms the calibre of the man and his followers. Had I been then what I am now, I would have fought my leader's case and by all the powers invested in me, I sure as hell would have won; that is to say, my leader Doctor PAISLEY would have been exonerated, and his good character restored. Doctor PAISLEY is a peace-loving, fun-loving wonderful man and let no one say a word to the contrary! This province of ours has never understood the true jewel we have in a leader like Doctor PAISLEY, so, I have to conclude that his talents would have been better appreciated in some far off country, the likes of 'Chile' or 'South Africa' in bygone years.

HAIN NIGEL, (stops playing with car while speaking) I like the name NIGEL, it has a nice ring to it; especially for a future leader, at home we're all hoping it may not be too long a wait for someone like you to step into Mr PAISLEY'S shoes, he's been there long enough – maybe he'll resign soon –

W/Ward (putting the mirror down while he speaks) I think there's as much chance of 'big IAN' resigning as there is of junior being voted Mr personality of the year. (starts looking in the mirror again)

HAIN NIGEL, you know that this is not a political decision, it's a security decision, Honest, and HUGH here will confirm this to you if you want confirmation. (ORDE is still picking his nose and at this point he wipes it under the table and then continues picking without speaking)

DODDS I – we don't need confirmation, we would have preferred McGUINNESS, but KELLY will do for the time being! We're sure something will be announced soon, if not, then we're not playing at all!

W/W (Holding up mirror to his face) Don't you think that maybe you people in the DUP should be taking a more inward look at yourselves – as a party I mean.

DODDS (Looking straight at him as he sits down) No I do not think there is a need for the DUP to look any further than the eye can see – the DUP eye that is!

HAIN Boys boys boys now don't be falling out (is still playing with car on table) HUGH you're keeping very quiet – (looks up at ORDE and ORDE stares back but says nothing – HAIN then looks at his watch – puts car into his pocket dusts himself down stands up) Right SHAUN are we ready – this is it boys – meetings over – by the way SHAUN that last face you pulled – it's got that sincere look about it – keep it on!

THEY ALL STAND UP AND DUST THEMSELVES DOWN – ORDE MOVES FIRST, HE GOES TO THE SLIMLINE TABLE AND WASHES HIS HANDS IN BASIN – LETS THEM DRIP FOR A FEW SECONDS AND THEN DRIES THEM WITH TOWEL. HE TURNS AND STARES AT EACH AS HE SAYS:

ORDE This has been like the STALKER and STEVENS inquiry – A WASTE OF MY TIME!

ALL LEAVE STAGE AS PHONE RINGS IN BACKGROUND:

STELLA Hello MARGARET – as you'd expect. The job's done!

MAGGIE Good. Let me know who's next!

STELLA I'll be in touch shortly! Bye.

End

CONNOLLY

I was honoured to have been asked by The National Graves Association to write for their 4 upcoming lectures on four of the 1916 leaders in advance of Easter 2011. It was a pleasure but also a daunting task because I was instructed that each drama was not to be any longer than 15minutes. So to be informative without lowering the tone of the first class lectures that were to be given was my priority. I can only hope that I succeeded in setting out what I hoped would be educational, interesting and entertaining to all those who came to watch and listen. Of course the wonderful actors are responsible for interpreting my vision.

This 12 minute drama is partly based on historical fact and supposition of what might have been said after his execution.

CAST:

LILLIE CONNOLLY JOHN LENNON

NORA CONNOLLY SOLDIER AND VOICE OVERS:

The Rose Tree by W.B.YEATES

Song at beginning and end of drama 'JAMES CONNOLLY' recorded by
KATHLEEN THOMPSON R.I.P.

STAGE SETTINGS: Rocking chair where Lillie is seated
And empty chair symbolic of execution of CONNOLLY.

LILLIE He was your da, your leader, your comrade – he was my husband,
my lover – the father of my children and the love of my life! When he walked
into a room, my heart skipped a beat, and when he lay bleeding in the GPO,
my heart bled and I felt every pain he felt, because, we were never two
souls – always the one! He told me before he died about WINNIE staying
with him in the GPO when she could have escaped, every body was loyal to
JAMES, he brought out the best of everything in people. It was a kind of a
comfort to talk to WINNIE about it later – after they killed him!

NORA Sometimes he was like a fierce wind, that forced us to be ready and
prepared; and other times that I was with him, he was like a soft breeze
drawing out the best from frightened hearts, people weren't afraid to be
themselves with him. In Belfast with the mill girls he was like a god, a
workers' god sent to redeem them from the slave mentality that the bosses
nourished to keep them enslaved; I watched as he liberated their minds
encouraging the fight in them to strike and strike out for their rights as
workers and more importantly as women.

LILLIE That poem Yeats wrote, The Rose Tree, I can see your da
philosophising, as he did, to the idealist (both laugh)

The stage is blacked out except for the spotlight on the empty chair and a
voice over begins:

V/O Oh words are lightly spoken
Said PEARSE to CONNOLLY
Maybe a breath of politic words
Has withered our Rose Tree;
Or maybe but a wind that blows
Across the bitter sea.
"It needs to be but watered",
JAMES CONNOLLY replied,

“To make the green come out again
And spread on every side,
And shake the blossom from the bud
To be the garden’s pride.’
“But where can we draw water,’
Said PEARSE to CONNOLLY,
“When all the wells are parched away?
(pause)
O plain as plain can be
There’s nothing but our own red blood
Can make a right Rose Tree”.

LIGHTS ON FULL:

NORA They were profound words ma, for da did inspire everywhere he went, he lit a spark that could never be put out – not then and not now; he went where he was needed, he understood the power of unity ma, family unity, community unity and the workers unity and not just the men workers but the women – remember what he said ma: “the worker is the slave of capitalist society, females are the slave of slaves” his thinking was way before his time.

LIGHTS DIMMED:

JOHN LENNON’S version of ‘Sunday Bloody Sunday’ is played up to ‘not a soldier shot dead and they nailed the coffin lids’ (repeated also at end of monologue)

Enters JOHN LENNON from front seat of audience talks to empty chair (he can see CONNOLLY)

JOHN Hi ya JAMES my name’s JOHN LENNON I was from Liverpool, I was a proud Liverpudlian JAMES and I think we would have got on famously! Just want ta tell ya JAMES that I thought you were great, you were thee ultimate working class hero. Something you said once helped me to understand better, things from the feminist point of view; your words inspired a whole new perspective on women as equals and the way they were exploited by the bosses – who were usually men – and then of course they were also exploited by men in almost every aspect of their lives and that

included in the home. It was the “keep em in the kitchen, bare foot and pregnant” mentality. I wrote a song with that in mind – it was banned for a long time, but finally the boss men and the status quo came around; money I believe brought them round, see nothing much has changed JAMES from the LSD (£.s.d.) quarter; I’m talkin pounds, shillings and pence of your day – JAMES. You said and I quote “the worker is the slave of capitalist society, females are the slave of slaves” man that just blew my mind. It was so profound man (slight pause) I wrote ‘Woman is the nigger of the world’ and it took them ages to figure it out but they did in the end; I’d throw your quote in any time I was asked to explain what the song meant! JAMES I know you won’t recognise the name FRED HAMPTON he was a Black Panther livin in Chicago in ’69 he was shot dead as he lay sleeping in bed; he coined the phrase ‘ you can kill the revolutionary but not the revolution’ and you know what man maybe he had you in mind when he thought that up! Just wish I’d written about you JAMES! (gives JAMES’ chair the thumbs up as he exits stage) See ya later comrade!

AS SUNDAY BLOODY SUNDAY PLAYS HE WALKS BACK TO SEAT:

NORA ‘No movement was assured of success that had not women in it’ I heard him say many a time; ‘Win the women to your cause and your cause is secure’ and through da, the Irish Citizens Army was the first army to admit women to its ranks and to give them equal status! Ma (pause) your man, my father JAMES CONNOLLY, was a prophet and a genius and I loved him!

LILLIE He faced many a tyrant on many a shop floor, in Scotland, Dublin, Belfast, America – but he never faced a firing party. He knew how to talk..... how to live..... how and when to walk away..... so I knew he’d know how to die. He faced death the way he faced everything in life – with his eyes wide open. He could see things as they were at any given time and he’d know straight away how things could be brought round, transformed, settled. How could I not be proud of him – how could I not love him – (softly) still!

LIGHTS DIM AND SPOT LIGHT IS ON CHAIR AS SOLDIER WITH RIFLE WALKS OVER TO STAGE FROM FRONT SEAT OF AUDIENCE:

SOLDIER they carried him in and there he lay
but not a word did I hear him say,

he didn't cry or beg in vain
nor did he attempt to move nor
make a commotion of his pain –
(thoughtful silence)
only afterwards I learned his name.
(another thoughtful silence)
his eyes wide open
I felt his stare and to tell the truth
it brought me to prayer;
and I shivered inward that I should care
for a man before me strapped in a chair
whose blood my rifle was about to spill,
as the orders were shouted I shook at
the scene, but I then was a lad of just 17
this was my first that I would make die
don't ever believe that soldiers don't cry;
(pause) he 'ner bowed his head nor did he sigh
and again I could not fathom why he so
bravely stood, about to die like a King in his glory
beneath that pleasant May sky;
and with all these passing years
I still don't know why,
for this man JAMES CONNOLLY,
I remember and sigh!

NORA WALKS OVER AND TAKES LILLIE BY ARM TO STAND AT CHAIR.

SOLDIER BRINGS HIMSELF TO ATTENTION AND SALUTES AT CHAIR.

MAIN LIGHTS SLOWLY GO OUT WITH SPOT LIGHT STILL ON CHAIR AS
THE SONG JAMES CONNOLLY IS PLAYED THEN SPOT LIGHT
ABRUPTLY GOES OUT.

END

John Lennon quoted Connolly in 1972 during an interview on the Dick
Cavett show U.S.A. (shown on youtube)

My Son Pdraig

This is a one act short play which is a pre-lude to a lecture on Padraig Pearse. The speeches are authentic and the rest is supposition.

Scene set in room with Mrs Pearse in rocking chair answering questions put to her by a journalist.

Cast:

MRS PEARSE

JOURNALIST (JOURN FOR SHORT)

PADRAIG PEARSE (WHEN SPEAKING WILL BE REFERRED TO AS PEARSE)

EIBHLIN NIC NIOCAILL (EVELEEN NICHOLLS PADRAIG'S GIRL FRIEND)
JUDGE

WILLIE

Mrs Pearse is talking to journalist and as she talks about some incidents in her son's life they are acted out on stage

Scene 1

MRS P (rocking in chair) Now young man before you begin I want you to remember that I had two sons not just one! My son Willie meant as much to us as PADRAIG did; people tend to overlook this. (slight pause, rocking)
Now how can I help you?

JOURN I do appreciate that you had two sons Mrs PEARSE, and I'll be asking you about your son WILLIE after we deal with PADRAIG. If that's ok!

MRS P Fine then (fixing her skirt) ask what you may.

JOURN Well, our readers want to know about the real PADRAIG PEARSE; not so much PADRAIG PEARSE the hero, the saint, the scholar, but PEARSE the man, what made him who he was, and why, if I may say so MRS PEARSE, in practical terms, the failed leader, failed because he didn't win in the end; the revolution he led failed and it ended in his own death and the deaths of many others including your son WILLIE. And yet people still admire him, they idealise him because they say he inspires them. Tell me MRS PEARSE, tell all our readers, how and why after all these years does he still inspire? What was it – what is it about him.....?

MRS P I can tell you about my son Padraig – all that he was and much of what he did.....and then you have to make your own mind up about what is

– what it really is – that inclines people to want to be like him; they want to follow him, even to the grave. I have to inform you that that's the way it was when he was alive; people followed him, they trusted him! It's as though his admirers want to travel spiritually on the same road as he did I don't mean that in a religious sense mind you because the manner of PADRAIG'S death like the deaths of all the leaders of '16 and including my son WILLIE'S death, they're examples of an indefinable love, that any man or woman could possibly have for their country! Although none of the women were executed, and that wasn't their fault – though perhaps fault isn't the correct word either; what I'm trying to say is that, when Countess Markiewicz was sentenced to death and then the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment on account of her gender, she sent word to Commander Maxwell that she led and fought without fear or regret, and so the consequences of her actions should be those same consequences that the male leaders were condemned to.

JOURN Certainly; so would PADRAIG have influenced Markiewicz in that direction? Taking that sort of a stand!

MRS P Oh no, no not at all; she was a woman who knew her own mind and that's that! (rocking – smiles and nods head as though remembering) What was I telling you, oh yes, PADRAIG, my son PADRAIG, well he was a good child, a happy child, we were always a happy family and thank God we were never poor, even after his father – my late husband James died. PADRAIG loved the poor, he had a special understanding of the impoverished people of Ireland; especially from before and during The Great Hunger and I say quite deliberately The Great Hunger because there was no famine here; and he lay the blame firmly on the British, the greed of the British and their inhuman treatment of the Irish people. He loved all things Irish and wanted only what was good and noble for Ireland. He saw an Ireland that was Irish in all ways; an Ireland free from all anglicized influences: culturally, linguistically and that's why he created St Enda's school; to teach Irish children how to be Irish; how to love Ireland, if they didn't already know!

JOURN But what about himself. How did he see himself? Surely he didn't live and die only for Ireland? He must have had a life away from all the politicing.

MRS P No..... quite frankly that was his life! Ireland and her people were his life! You had to know my son PADRAIG to understand his complete unselfishness.....his complete and utter abandonment of self.....; eventually, he lived for Ireland and Ireland only! Of course he did at one time have hopes and plans for a future with someone who loved Ireland as much as he did; Eibhlín (deep sigh) Eibhlín understood his love for Ireland but sadly she died trying to save a friend in the cold waters of the Blasket Islands.

LIGHTS DIM ON MOTHER AND LIGHT UP ON PEARSE AND EIBHLÍN DANCING 'TWO HAND REEL' TO MUSIC.

PEARSE Shakespeare would compare thee to a summers' day but I...I compare thee to an Irish rose.....for thy art: Irish, lovely, strong and I shall praise thy name in an Irish song!

EIBHLÍN PADRAIG.....I know your nature so well, you couldn't say that but in verse, me thinks your shyness is getting worse; but I shall cure thee and become thy nurse!

THEY LAUGH GAZING INTO ONE ANOTHERS EYES AND DO A CEILI SWING; THEN BACK TO THE REEL.

EIBHLÍN PADRAIG, you can give all these wonderful speeches, write the most inspiring words put together and yet, yet you remain so shy in the company of others; especially women. But I'm so glad that I understand you and the pain your shyness causes you. My poor poor PADRAIG!

PEARSE When will you say 'yes?'

EIBHLÍN I told you PADRAIG, when Ireland's free.

PEARSE That may be sooner than you're thinking..... my love!

EIBHLÍN How much sooner will it be than I'm thinking.....my love!

THEY BOTH LAUGH AND DO A CEILI SWING. AS THEY CONTINUE THE REEL A V/O OF PEARSE IS HEARD RECITING POEM HE WROTE AFTER EIBHLÍN'S DEATH

Oh lovely head of the woman that I loved,
In the middle of the night I remember thee:

But reality returns with the sun's whitening,
Alas, that the slender worm gnaws thee to-night.
Beloved voice, that wast low and beautiful,
Is it true that I heard thee in my slumbers?
Or is the knowledge true that tortures me?
My grief, the tomb hath no sound or voice!

LIGHTS OUT ON PEARSE AND BACK TO MOTHER:

MRS P Sometimes only a mother can see the broken heart in her child. I pray that God in His mercy permitted EIBHLÍN to walk by PADRAIG'S side as he proudly marched to face his executioners.

JOURN Quite a perspective, MRS PEARSE!

MRS P A mother's perspective, and I tell you my sons had no shame in loving God above..... and they were proud in proclaiming it!

JOURN What I meant was him being in love and getting hurt, our readers will be interested in the fact that PADRAIG your son was human.....you know what I'm saying, in many ways he was like the rest of us. Am I right?

MRS P No, I wouldn't say so, not entirely, no. (Pause) Yes he could be hurt and he had known another kind of love other than his love for Ireland, but, it was his unselfish nature that made him different, and another thing, he was always late; he was late the night BULMER HOBSON swore him into the I.R.B.!

LIGHTS DIMS AND OPENS ON PEARSE AT SIDE OF STAGE IN UNIFORM:

PEARSE (R. HAND RAISED AND HOLDS BIBLE IN L.HAND)

In the presence of God I PADRAIG PEARSE do solemnly swear that I will do my utmost to establish the independence of Ireland, and that I will bear true allegiance to the Supreme Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Government of the Irish Republic and implicitly obey the constitution of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and all my superior officers and that I will preserve inviolable the secrets of the organisation.

STANDS TO ATTENTION AND MARCHES OFF STAGE

JOURN Did he have a death wish? MRS PEARSE, some say he did!

MRS P (Smiles) No, no not a death wish, but he foresaw the death that was to befall him. How could he inspire and encourage others to spill their own blood and not be prepared to lead by example! He knew he would die for Ireland, and this became apparent to me his mother after his oration at the grave of O' DONOVAN ROSSA.

JOURN How was it obvious? Did he talk much about it?

MRS P No, he didn't but from that day onward he wore black. Always black as if in mourning for his coming death!

LIGHTS DIM: ENTER PEARSE IN UNIFORM SPEAKING TO AUDIENCE:
PEARSE

Rulers and Defenders of the Realm had need to be wary if they would guard against such processes.

Life springs from death; and from the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations. The Defenders of this Realm have worked well in secret and in the open. They think that they have pacified Ireland. They think that they have purchased half of us and intimidated the other half. They think that they have foreseen everything, think that they have provided against everything; but, the fools, the fools, the fools! – They have left us our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.

LIGHTS DIM AS PEARSE LEAVES STAGE:

JOURN His greatest moment must have been on the steps of the G.P.O. when he read the proclamation; proclaiming the Irish Republic. (Mrs PEARSE nods in agreement)

LIGHTS DIM ENTERS PEARSE ON STEP OF G.P.O. READING
PROCLAMATION:

PEARSE Irishmen and Irishwomen: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom. We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In every generation the Irish people have

asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty; six times during the last three hundred years they have asserted it to arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations.

LIGHTS DIM ON PEARSE AS HE LEAVES STAGE:

MRS P His greatness was recognised by everyone, even by those who put him to death. Did you know what the judge at the court martial said afterwards?

JOURN I think so but not word for word; tell me so I can tell the readers,
MRS PEARSE!

MRS P He said:

JUDGE IN MILITARY UNIFORM ENTERS STAGE:

JUDGE "I have done one of the hardest tasks I have ever had to do. I have had to condemn to death one of the finest characters I have ever come across. There must be something very wrong in the state of things that makes a man like that a rebel. I don't wonder that his pupils adore him."

EXITS STAGE:

JOURN MRS PEARSE, I'm only supposed to do an article of about 1000 words on your son PADRAIG, so I'll finish now with the last word from you and I promise I'll do my best to do the story justice.

MRS P One thousand words or one hundred thousand won't ever tell the whole story of my son PADRAIG but maybe these few simple words will suffice to tell an important part of his story from myself, his mother. I can only say that, for this, 1916, my son PADRAIG was born. He felt this in his bones and played his part to perfection. There is no shame in wanting to free your country from the hold of tyrants; only honour, joy and ultimately death. You can kill the body but not the spirit. The spirit of my son, PADRAIG PEARSE, lives on in the heart of every man and woman who desires to resist tyranny and live in the freedom that justice, equality and employment provide; for these are the foundation stones that deliver and maintain peace

in the heart of any country, and the heart of any country is the people themselves.

JOURN Just one last thing MRS PEARSE, the poem PADRAIG wrote for you, 'The Mother', I was wondering how you feel when you read it?

MR P (Smiling) I keep it in my heart, and there it shall remain! But you know he wrote me another poem 'To My Mother' and at day break if I try to glimpse that moment when a new day begins, I sometimes hear PADRAIG whisper it to me.

MRS PEARSE ROCKS IN CHAIR AS PADRAIG AND HIS BROTHER WILLIE WALK ON STAGE WEARING OPENED SHIRTS WITH BRACES ON TROUSERS;

CONTINUE:

You didn't ask about my son WILLIE; does not WILLIE deserve a thousand words? Did he not live and die for the same cause as his brother lived and died for? No matter, (says softly) I carry both my sons here (points to her heart) in the safe place of a mother's heart.

BOTH PADRAIG AND WILLIE STAND TOGETHER BEHIND ROCKING CHAIR. PADRAIG RECITES 'TO MY MOTHER'

My gift to you hath been the gift of sorrow,
My one return for your rich gifts to me,
Your gift of life, your gift of love and pity,
Your gift of sanity, your gift of faith
(for who hath had such faith as yours since the old time,
And what were my poor faith without your strong belief to found upon) For
all these precious things my gift to you
is sorrow. I have seen your dear face line, your face soft to my touch,
familiar to my hands and to my lips since I was little: I have seen how you
have battled with your tears for me, and with a proud glad look, although
your heart was breaking. O mother (for you know me) you must have
known, when I was silent, that some strange thing within me kept me dumb,
some strange deep thing, when I should shout my love. I have sobbed in
secret for that reserve which yet I could not master. I would have brought
royal gifts, and I have brought you sorrow and tears: and yet, it may be that I
have brought you something else besides- the memory of my

deed and of my name. A splendid thing which shall not pass away. When men speak of me, in praise or in dispraise, you will not heed, but treasure your own memory of your first son..

AS LIGHTS GO OUT THE FOGGY DEW IS PLAYED
END

LIAM

Because there is so much to know and understand about LIAM MELLOWS it's hard for a playwright to perhaps create something of substance in a drama of 15 minutes or less. Most people know about the four courts; his arrest and imprisonment in Mountjoy and how he was taken out at dawn on 8th December 1922 to be executed with his comrades (one from each province) RORY O' CONNOR, DICK BARRETT and JOE MC KELVEY in reprisal for the shooting of SEAN HALES.

In order to inform and connect with the person of LIAM MELLOWS I have decided that my best perspective is through himself and his mother. I hope I have achieved my aim in giving an insight into the humanity/inhumanity of us all. Along with the historical facts the remainder is purely my imagination. (LIGHT ALTERNATES ON/OFF BETWEEN ACTORS AS EACH SPEAKS)

Cast:

LIAM MELLOWS (left handed)

MRS MELLOWS (mother)

*SEAN Mac DIARMADA

Music and songs:

The Croppy Boy

The Fields of Athenry (music only)

The Minstrel Boy

*The Top of the Cork Road (Song sung by Dick Barrett as he was led to his execution)

The West's Awake

LIAM'S letter is read in VOICE OVER

THE SCENE BEGINS IN LIAM'S PRISON CELL MINUTES AFTER BEING TOLD OF HIS IMMINANT EXECUTION; AT THE OTHER END OF THE STAGE IS HIS MOTHER WHO CAN'T SLEEP BECAUSE A DREAD

CONCERNING LIAM HAS COME OVER HER. ON ENTERING THE KITCHEN SHE PUTS AN APRON OVER HER NIGHT DRESS AND BEGINS TO PEEL POTATOES INTO SINK/POT. THERE ARE PICTURES OF THE SACRED HEART AND LIAM ON WALL. (HIS MOTHER CALLS HIM WILLIE)

LIGHTS ON LIAM: V/O AS HE WRITES LETTER:

LIAM My dearest mother, the time is short and much that I would like to say must go unsaid. But you will understand; in such moments heart speaks to heart. At 3.30 this morning we (Dick Barrett, Rory O'Connor, Joe McKelvey and I) were informed that we were to be executed as "reprisal". Welcome be the will of God, for Ireland is in his keeping despite foreign monarchs and treaties. Though unworthy of the greatest human honour that can be paid an Irishman or woman, I go to join Tone and Emmet, the Fenians, Tom Clarke, Connolly, Pearse, Kevin Barry and Childers. My last thoughts will be on God and Ireland and you. LIGHTS OUT.

LIGHTS ON AS MOTHER WALKS TO SINK PUTTING ON APRON AND BEGINS TO PEEL POTATOES. FRIDAY 3.30am 8th DECEMBER 1922.

MRS M Dearest JESUS, I can't sleep for thought of WILLIE, I've a sore knee JESUS so I won't be kneeling; I feel it in my heart JESUS that something terrible is going to happen WILLIE; remember the last time I felt this, this dread..... Dear JESUS (in desperation) I want to cry, I want to cry out loud to you. Please help my son, please save him from – what ever these feeling are about. Sacred Heart of JESUS, help him not to be afraid, let him know I'm thinking of him and carry him in my heart. Lord JESUS, you understand the things that every mother carries in her heart; for every mother's heart is surely big enough to carry all the burdens and worries of her children.

LIGHT FADES:

LIGHT ON LIAM: STILL WRITING LETTER: V/O

LIAM You must not grieve, mother darling. Once before you thought you had given me to Ireland. The reality has come now. You will bear this as you have borne all the afflictions the cause of Ireland brought you-nobly and bravely. It is a sore trial for you, but that great courageous soul of yours will rejoice, for I die for the truth. Life is only for a little while, and we shall be

reunited hereafter. I would write to Barney separately, but, alas! He is not at home. That he will be brave I know; that he will persevere until the wrong is righted and the shadow of shame is lifted from our country I do not doubt. May God bless and protect him and give him courage, fortitude and wisdom necessary to adhere to truth and honour and principles. Through you I send to him my fondest love.

LIGHT OUT AND BACK TO MOTHER:

MRS M (Whispers softly to LIAM'S picture on WALL) I've a feeling you'll be home soon son! Oh Lord, remember the Christmas he walked in to Batt O'Connor's in Brendan Road. He played everything he knew on the fiddle, it was such a wonderful Christmas for us all. He sang 'The Croppy Boy' both MULCAHY and GEAROID O'SULLIVAN joined in. WILLY shared his music: his songs, dreams, energy, resistance..... his hunger for freedom and his hope for the kind of future that CONNOLLY inspired him to strive for (sighs.....) yes, he shared all these things with MULCAHY and COLLINS, but not the acceptance of that treaty; that's the one thing he'll never share with them! (slight pause) My boy; he sang so well that Christmas night!

FOUR CHAIRS AND TWO STOOLS ON FLOOR AT FRONT OF STAGE:
Fiddle player, MULCAHY, O'SULLIVAN, a young girl and two older women are also seated and drinking whiskey and wine.

MELLOWS (steps down from stage (prison cell) stands in between MULCAHY AND O'SULLIVAN and sings THE CROPPY BOY
(words by Carroll Malone; air: Caillín Óg a Stór or this scene can be acted as follows *see party scene at end of song)

"Good men and true in this house who dwell,
To a stranger bouchal I pray you tell:
Is the priest at home, or may he be seen?
I would speak a word with Father Green."

"The priest's at home, boy, and may be seen;
'tis easy speaking with Father Green.
But you must wait till I go and see
If the Holy Father alone may be."

FIDDLER PLAYS AS LIAM TAPS HIS FEET
THEN CONTINUES SINGING:

The priest said naught, but a rustling noise
Made the youth look above in wild surprise;
The robes were off, and in scarlet there
Sat a yeoman captain with fiery glare.
At Geneva Barracks that young man died,
And at Passage they have his body laid.
Good people who live in peace and joy,
breathe a prayer and a tear for the Croppy boy

THEN WOMAN NEXT TO YOUNG GIRL ASKS YOUNG GIRL TO SING BY
SAYING “A SONG FROM YOU ROSE” SHE STANDS AND SINGS THE
WEST’S ASLEEP BY THOMAS DAVIS))

When all beside a vigil keep, the West’s asleep, the West’s asleep, alas and
well may Erín weep that Connacht lies in slumber deep. Take lake and plain,
smile fare and free, mid rocks their guardian chivalry, Sing O let man learn
liberty, from crashing wind and lashing sea.

And if when all a vigil keep, the West’s asleep, the West’s asleep, alas and
well may Erin weep that Connacht lies in slumber deep, but hark a voice like
thunder spake, the West’s awake the West’s awake, sing, oh hurrah let
England quake, we’ll watch till death for Erin’s sake.

SCENE ENDS WITH LIAM AND GIRL DOING CEILLI SWING AND
OTHERS CLAPPING AS FIDDLE PLAYER ENDS TUNE. LIGHTS OUT ON
FLOOR AND BACK TO MRS M.

MRS M Oh Sacred Heart of JESUS, I should be writing WILLIE a letter
instead of peeling spuds, what is it about spuds JESUS? Every time I get
worried or upset I begin to make a pot of potatoes, maybe it’s the famine,
Lord, (smiling to herself) or maybe it’s – I want to have a dinner ready for my
boys should they walk in on me unexpected! My mind is everywhere this
night, it’s wondering about WILLIE in that cold prison cell and it’s wondering
about my BARNEY and for some unknown reason I can’t get Mrs PEARSE
out of my mind, maybe I should go to see her tomorrow (slight pause) or
maybe I’ll be leaving it to Monday.

LIGHTS DIM ON MOTHER AND LIGHT ON LIAM STILL WRITING. V/O

LIAM Through you I also send another message. It is this: Let no thought of revenge or reprisals animate Republicans because of our deaths. We die for the truth. Vindication will come, the mists will be cleared away, and brothers in blood will before long be brothers once more in arms against the oppressor of our country-Imperialist England. In this belief I die happy, forgiving all, as I hope myself to be forgiven. The path the people of Ireland must tread is straight and broad and true, though narrow. Only by following it can they be men. It is a hard road but it is the road Our Saviour followed-the road of sacrifice. The Republic lives; our deaths make it a certainty.

I had hoped that some day I might rest in some quiet place-beside grandfather and grandmother in Castletown, not amidst the worldly pomp of Glasnevin, but if it is to be the prison clay it is all the sweeter, for many of our best lie there. I send my love to Aunts Maggie, Julia, Jane and Annie, all my cousins in Wexford, Dublin, Clare and Armagh. Tell Patsy also I send my love, and Father Feeney and Father McGuinness.

Go to Mrs Pearse. She will comfort you. I intended writing to Mrs. Woods and family, but time prevents me doing so. Give my love to them all. I have had the chaplain to see me. It is sad, but I cannot agree to accept the Bishops' Pastoral. My conscience is quite clear, thank God. With old Gaodhals I believe that those who die for Ireland have no need of prayer. God bless, protect and comfort you, Your loving son, Willie.

HE CONTINUES TO START ANOTHER LETTER BEFORE LOOKING UP TO SEE SEAN MAC DAIRMADA STAND BEFORE HIM:

LIAM My God, (shocked) MAC DIARMADA, SEAN it's you, you yourself! What in the name of God are you.....Oh but I'm so glad so so glad it's you SEAN! Is this a hallucination? (slight pause) You can't really be there I mean here.....I don't care if you're not really really here, I'm just glad it's you I see before me, my dear forever friend and comrade – SEAN MAC DAIRMADA!

SEAN Tis me all right, my friend and comrade! I'm here to stand with you to the last shot is fired! Don't worry LIAM there is nothing for you to fear. Believe me, you faced worse during the rising.....so fear not.

LIAM I'm not afraid of death; death holds nothing I fear, my conscience is clear; but SEAN, I don't want to die, not now and not like this, not by guns fired by our own; for like it or not they are still our own! If it was the British that would be expected, I could accept that, but not this, and not today above all days. We were to go and celebrate mass at nine o'clock this morning and now the nine o'clock mass will be celebrated for us: for RORY, DICK, JOE and me! (puts his finger to his lip and says) SEAN, can you hear RORY'S voice.....listen..... he wrote the words in the Four Courts for a Declaration to the Citizens of Dublin and for all of Dublin to read: (whispers) Listen!

V/O RORY'S VOICE:

"And how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds
For the ashes of his fathers
And the temples of his gods?"

LIAM (Whispers) Did you hear him SEAN; he's this habit of rhyming it off when things get tough! (slight laugh) O'MALLEY laughed at him when he read it; the idea of it being a declaration (laughs)

SEAN NODDS HIS HEAD

SEAN Finish your letters LIAM, time is drawing near!

LIAM CONTINUES WRITING, STOPS FOR A FEW SECONDS LOOKS UP AT SEAN AND SAYS:

LIAM *They smashed my violin SEAN, smashed it to pieces, vengeance it was, I should like to play something now before I go: a happy tune, a soothing melody, something my mother would like! I think a lullaby perhaps.
LIGHTS OUT – LIGHTS ON MOTHER.

MRS M (Accidentally cuts her finger with knife) Oh Dear Jesus what am I doing. I've drew blood on this Holy morning of The Immaculate Conception. (Sucks her bloodied finger and then covers her face with hands before joining them in prayer) Oh Dear Mother of God, you suffered yourself knowing that your Son was suffering, not for himself, but for all mankind. Mother, my son LIAM, what more has he to suffer for Ireland? Grant us peace, oh Sacred Heart have mercy on us all and grant eternal rest onto them, oh Lord! Lord I'm so glad I sent him in the fiddle; if you have music,

Lord, you are never alone! Willie's music means so much to him, he couldn't survive in there without it. I wish I could cradle him in my arms and sing to him one last time before the dawn breaks and this Holy day begins.

V/O SINGS 'THE MINSTREL BOY (by Thomas Moore 1779-1852) or if actress can sing it live.

V/O The Minstrel Boy to the war has gone
In the ranks of death you will find him;
His father's sword he has girded on,
And his wild harp slung behind him;
"Land of Song!" said my warrior boy
"though all the world betrays thee,
One sword at least thy rights shall guard,
One faithful harp shall praise thee!"

GOES DOWN SLOWLY AND PAINFULLY ON HER KNEES TAKES
ROSARY BEADS FROM APRON – PRAYS SILENTLY. LIGHT OUT AND
OVER TO LIAM:

LIAM (to SEAN) I would have liked to have spoken with ERNIE – O' MALLEY and to stand shoulder to shoulder with him for the last time; he could recite me one of SHAKESPEARS'S sonnets and I – I could sing for him 'The Croppy Boy'. We walked along the river together and into The Four Courts; hiding in the shadows as we heard the marching feet of men ready for battle; we couldn't be certain if it was our men, or if it was the Staters; but when the gates flung open we recognised our own, for they were without uniform; proudly carrying their rifles. The Tipperary men had arrived; I felt like jumping up and down and cheering as we stepped forward to greet them. They came to save us. (deep sigh) Even the Tipperary men can't save me now!

ALL LIGHTS OUT: THE ECHO SOUND OF CELL DOOR OPENING AND MARCHING FOOTSTEPS, ONE BY ONE THEY MEET UNTIL THERE ARE FOUR SETS OF MARCHING FEET. THEY ARE HEARD FOR ABOUT 45 SECONDS THEN THE SINGING BY BARRETT OF 'THE TOP OF THE CORK ROAD' (a favourite song of his) FOLLOWED BY MELLOWS SAYING 'SLAN LIBH, BOYS' MORE FOOTSTEPS, SILENCE AND THEN WILD GUN FIRE. IT TAKES 9 REVOLVER SHOTS TO FINISH THE FOUR OFF.

V/O OF AN OFFICER WHO WAS ON GUARD DUTY THAT NIGHT FOR THE EXECUTIONS:

OFFICER At 7.30am the prisoners were brought out with the chaplain out to the prison yard. They were placed against the prison wall. The four prisoners were blind folded although RORY O CONNOR specifically asked not to be blind folded. JOSEPH McKELVEY said “Good bye boys and God bless every body.

At 8am the officer in charge of the firing squad gave the order to fire. The majority of those in the firing squad aimed at RORY O CONNOR. We had detailed 5 members to fire at each prisoner but this didn't happen. RORY O CONNOR fell dead immediately. There were so many bullets in him that his clothes went on fire. None of the other prisoners were dead after the first volley. Two of them were on the ground. I walked over and gave them the coup de grace by revolver. While I was doing this JOE cried to the medical officer “for Christ sake, kill me doc” the doctor seeing that I was standing in a daze pulled me away from the other men and grabbed me by my Sam Brown belt and pulled me down until I was close to JOE Mc KELVEY who said “another one” I then shot him in the chest through the paper target – but it wasn't enough and he repeated “another one”. This I gave him – and I was satisfied he was dead. V/O OF OFFICER ENDS.

THEN VOICE OVER OF RORY SAYING: “AND HOW CAN MAN DIE BETTER, THAN FACING FEARFUL ODDS, FOR THE ASHES OF HIS FATHERS AND THE TEMPLES OF HIS GODS?”

A MOMENTS SILENCE AND THEN THE TUNE OF *THE FIELDS OF ATHENRY.

END:

*LIAM'S VIOLIN WAS SMASHED TO PIECES BY GAURDS AND MILITARY WHO RAIDED HIS CELL AFTER AN ATTEMPTED ESCAPE BY THE PRISONERS IN MOUNTJOY.

* THE FIELDS OF ATHENRY WAS NOT WRITTEN UNTIL THE LATE 1970'S BUT I INCLUDED THE TUNE BECAUSE LIAM MELLOWS TRAINED OVER 700 MEN IN THE FIELDS OF ATHENRY DURING 1916.

*SEAN MAC DAIRMADA IS BROUGHT INTO DRAMA BECAUSE MELLOWS GREATLY ADMIRED HIM AND LOOKED ON HIM AS A TRUE

HERO.

‘THE TOP OF THE CORK LOVELY LEE’ WAS PROBABLY SUNG IN
SWEET DEFIANCE

ALSO MRS MELLOWS WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT HAVE USED
THE TERM ‘FAMINE’ SHE WOULD HAVE SAID ‘THE GREAT HUNGER’
BUT FOR SIMPLICITY AND INSTANT MENTAL VISUALISATION OF
STARVING PEOPLE I HAVE USED THE FORMER.

MARKIEVICZ

A short drama not entirely based on historical facts. The scene begins on
the floor (not on stage) with W.B.YEATS reciting his poem about
MARKIEVICZ. He leads the audience through a few events in her life
beginning in her prison cell after the Easter rising and also into a soup
kitchen she set up during the 1913 lock out. The father of one of the prison
guards was a worker during the lock out and he and his family were
dependant on the charity of MARKIEVICZ at that time. In script CM will
stand for COUNTESS MARKIEVICZ and W.B. will represent YEATS. Music
played at beginning and end of drama ‘Women of Ireland’.

CAST:

W.B.YEATS

MARKIEVICZ

MAN AT SOUP KITCHEN

TWO PRISON GUARDS

ACT 1

SCENE 1

YEATS WALKS ABOUT FLOOR RECITING HIS POEM WRITTEN ABOUT
MARKIEVICZ ‘ON A POLITICAL PRISONER’

W.B. She that but little patience knew,
From childhood on, had now so much
A grey gull lost its fear and flew
Down to her cell and there alit,
And there endured her fingers’ touch
And from her fingers ate its bit.

Did she in touching that lone wing
Recall the years before her mind
Became a bitter, an abstract thing,
Her thought some popular enmity:
Blind and leader of the blind
Drinking the foul ditch where they lie?

When long ago I saw her ride
Under Ben Bulbin to the meet,
The beauty of her country side
With all youth's lonely wildness stirred,
She seemed to have grown clean and sweet
Like any rock-bred, sea-borne bird:

Sea-borne, or balanced on the air
When first it sprang out of the nest
upon some lofty rock to stare
upon the cloudy canopy,
while under its storm-beaten breast
cried out the hollows of the sea.

TOWARD END OF POEM HE STANDS TO SIDE OF STAGE AND AS HE
TALKS HE MOTIONS WITH HIS HAND TO STAGE:

W.B. There were 7 signatories to THE PROCLAMATION OF POBLACHT
NA H EIREANNI; and in my opinion, a name that should have been there,
not as an afterthought or the token female, but signed in her own right as a
significant leader along with the others..... COUNTESS MARKIEVICZ. I
thought it would end badly for her, but then, it really didn't end badly for her
at all! But what I will say is "too long a sacrifice can make a stone of the
heart" and that's how I often thought about CON.

MARKIEVICZ IS LYING ON BED IN PRISON CELL – GUARD ENTERS TO
TAUNT HER AS SHE BRUSHES FLOOR:

CM What is it now? I'm supposed to be in solitary confinement; can't I be left
alone with my thoughts! If you don't bring me news of my comrades then go,
you have nothing I need! You should be ashamed to call yourself an Irish
woman, doing the dirty work for your English masters. Don't you

understand, you mean nothing to them, you are but a tool they use to try and keep your own people and class down.

GUARD 1 Oh miss hoddy todgy; miss high and mighty hope you slept well last night in your straw palliasse, miss your down and feathers did ye? Did ye dream of all the destruction ye and your like caused. There's people out side here with no where to sleep tonight 'cause of ye.

CM Oh really, you didn't know the poor and the homeless and starving have always been here, I didn't make all these hardships happen – you can thank your British masters for that! Maybe if we all unite we can rid Ireland of everything British and bring back all that is Ireland – starting with her people!

GUARD 1 Bejesu's ye believe all that fackin crap, ye fackin feminist whore! What about the widows and orphans who depend on their war pensions from Britain? Will ye compensate them'ns? (them ones)

CM Hungry mouths make hungry minds..... they listened to REDMOND and sent their men to die for what? For a broken promise!

GUARD 1 Better than dyin for nothin.....will Mrs PEARSE be gettin a pension from your lot!

MARKIEVICZ LOOKS SURPRISED (SHE DOESN'T KNOW THAT THE EXECUTIONS ARE ABOUT TO BEGIN) A BURST OF GUN FIRE IS HEARD IN THE BACK GROUND. THE EXECUTIONS START. A VOLLEY OF SHOTS THEN ONE SINGLE SHOT.

CM What was that?

GUARD 1 Can't ye guess..... are ye that fackin stupid?

LIGHT ON YEATS AS HE WALKS UP AISLE BETWEEN AUDIENCE RECITING PART OF VERSE FROM 'EASTER 1916'

W.B. All changed, changed utterly:

A terrible beauty is born.

That woman's days were spent

In ignorant good-will,

Her nights in argument

Until her voice grew shrill,

What voice more sweet than hers

When, young and beautiful,

She rode to harriers?

All changed, everything changed, a terrible beauty was born!

(slight pause)

CON and EVA lived lavishly, the wealth ran through Lissadell like the blue blood of Royalty – there was no end to it. They were fortunate in that they were brought up to be kind, they empathised with the sickly and the poor, they always had a cause, EVA more so than CON in the beginning – but then, CON, darling CON, ran miles ahead with her generosity – not just of wealth, but more so I have to tell, of her spirit. She gave all and never counted the cost! I approached her once in the soup kitchen she ran for the strikers and their families during the Dublin Lock Out – and she chased me – ordered me out – I was only joking – but she shooed me out accusing me of being a damned nuisance. Some times darling CON could be so verbally forceful.

YEATS STANDS TO THE SIDE OF SOUP KITCHEN

C.M. (ladling a bowl of soup to the strikers) Have you enough for the family? You'll need more bread than that!

MAN Your kindness – thank you – I'll take only what will keep them alive – thank you – you've more than the Brady's to feed – I'm not a greedy man!

C.M. The children, all 8 of them, how are they doing? Still attending school?

MAN Too sickly to go to school daily, they manage a day or two a week, but the youngest is really sick, we just can't get her to eat, the other families in the tenement are keeping their one's well away from our room in case they catch something! There's only the one closet between 79 of us and nobody cleans up after they go –

C.M. You're still in Church Street?

MAN Ay we are for the moment, but if the child gets any worse we'll be on the street – nobody wants under the same roof – a leaking roof at that – as a sick child! We've nothing even left to pawn – we couldn't afford to redeem the blankets we pawned two weeks since!

C.M. I'll bring some bedding and medicine and first aid round after we finish here for the night, and I'll bring a doctor to have a look at the wee'n.

MAN God bless you, your goodness! (He walks away) I'll hurry round with the good news and hot soup.

C.M. (SHOUTING ACROSS TO JAMES CONNOLLY) JAMES – let NORA know I need to talk to her later – I'll see her back at MARTHA KELLY'S house along with MADELINE.

W.B. She had this band of women – all had different qualities – but the same shared passion and compassion. They all truly loved Ireland and I know that this love that they possessed was a love that never left them until death! (Walks over to stage – in cell)

C.M. What time is it?

GUARD1 (Laughing) Why? – have ye an appointment somewhere melady.

C.M. This is the 3rd of May and it must be about dawn!

ENTERS 2ND GUARD

GUARD 2 (To first guard) Why are you here? You're on duty in 'D' wing!

GUARD 1 I want her to know the damage she and her cohorts have done to the good people of Dublin.

GUARD 2 PULLS THE BRUSH FROM GUARD 1

GUARD 2 Go away NANCY you wouldn't know goodness if it hit you up the bake! This woman – this Lady –

C.M. (Raising her arms) Leave this cell immediately – both of you –

GUARD 2 I'm sorry Countess I would give you the keys to let yourself out – you saved my brother and all our family during the lock-out – your kindness will never be forgotten by the BRADY'S and that's a fact!

C.M. Those shots, what were they, who was it?

GUARD 2 I'm sorry Countess.....that was PADRAIG PEARSE they just killed!

TURNS HER HEAD TOWARDS THE WINDOW AND PRAYS

W.B. After her court-martial when her sentence was commuted from execution to life imprisonment, Con complained that she ought to face the firing party as did all the male leaders. There is so much more I would like to

say about Constance, but sometimes less is more. Her wonderful legacy of: decency, bravery and of womanhood are timeless jewels that will forever shine and spread their sparkle to any cause that, makes life worth living for!

YEATS MOVES ACROSS THE FLOOR SAYING HIS POEM

'In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markievicz

The light of evening, Lissadell,
Great windows open to the south,
Two girls in silk kimonos, both
Beautiful, one a gazelle.
But a raving Autumn shears
Blossom from the Summer's wreath;
The older is condemned to death,
Pardoned, drags out lonely years
Conspiring among the ignorant.
I know not what the younger dreams-
Some vague Utopia-and she seems,
When withered old and skeleton-gaunt,
An image of such politics.
Many a time I think to seek
One or the other out and speak
Of that old Georgian mansion, mix
Pictures of the mind, recall
That table and the talk of youth,
Two girls in silk kimonos, both
Beautiful, one a gazelle.
Dear shadows, now you know it all,
All the folly of a fight
With a common wrong or right.
The innocent and the beautiful
Have no enemy but time;
Arise and bid me strike a match
And strike another till time catch;
Should the conflagration climb,
Run till all the sages know.
We the great gazebo built,

They convicted us of guilt;
Bid me strike a match and blow.

ALL LIGHTS OUT:

DIM LIGHT IN CELL WHERE GUARD 2 IS BRUSHING FLOOR:

GUARD2 (STARTS TO SING THE GALTYSMORE MOUNTAINS)

On the Galtysmore mountains not far far away (stops brushing and sings to audience with hand and chin resting on top of brush shaft) I'll tell you a story that happened one day, of a young Irish colleen who's age was 16, and she hoisted her banner, white, orange and green. Now a young British soldier was passing that way he spied the young maiden her colours so gay, he laughed and he jeered and got off his machine, determined to capture the flag of Sinn Fein. No you can't have my banner the young maiden cried, either your blood or mine in this green valley lie, for I am a rebel it's plain to be seen and I'd lay down my life for white orange and green. Now the young British soldier turned white as the snow he got on his machine and away he did go for there's no use in fighting a maid of 16 who'd lay down her life for the flag of Sinn Fein. Now early next morning to Tipperary town, from the Galtysmore mountains the young maid came down, there were tears in her eyes it was plain to be seen, for Tom Ashe he died for the flag of Sinn Fein. FINISHES SONG AND BRUSHES TO EXIT FROM STAGE:

MARKIEVICZ MOVES TO FRONT OF STAGE (SPOT LIGHT) WEARING AN EVENING GOWN AND SAYS THE FOLLOWING:

Only wealth could have shamed me

But it never did!

For I shared the riches I'd been given, and more!

The 'more' being of greater importance because

The 'more' was my soul, my time, my energy, my sense of personage; I gave more freely and without regret.

And I gave my all and I gave my all willingly....I did not begrudge a single drop of sweat or sleeplessness or at times the weariness that comes with that helplessness of watching a people endure so much at the blood soaked hands of their neighbour! (England)

When I was presented at court a naive debutante to VICTORIA

I wore the dress proudly and it never occurred to me the cost was paid by starving mouths across the Irish sea;

When I crossed the gender barrier trousers suited best
 And more than once I was... King GEORGIE'S rebel guest
 For on Stephen's Green I fought there a rebel with a cause
 I aimed my gun wisely and shot to defeat; never missing a target
 (PAUSES AND SMILES) trying to force a British retreat!
 And now you people want to know.....and I think that very 'clear' of all the
 causes in the world why I held Ireland's cause so dear
 It was because I cherish freedom and the equality that is the right of every
 person to be enjoyed;
 But how I came to realise injustice and Ireland's plight
 (for such a cause I searched and searched in vain)
 Was the reading of a magazine 'The Peasant and Sinn Féin'
 Providence or Pádríc Colum who left it for me to see;
 And as they say, the rest..... is history!

END:

- Madeline referred to at soup kitchen is Madeline French Mullen and Martha Kelly who later married Michael Murphy, was part of the G.P.O. garrison Cumann Na mban, she was assigned to G.P.O. from The Imperial Hotel (now Clery's)
- Pádríc Colum had rented a cottage (which Markievicz afterwards also rented) and left behind a current magazine of the time called 'The Peasant and Sinn Féin' and that was the catalyst for her interest in the Irish cause.

Twenty Two Good Men

A short drama written to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the 1981 hunger-strike when 10 brave Irish Republicans gave their lives in the cause of Irish Freedom. The hunger-strike itself was not unique as it was the chosen weapon of other men and women world wide who also refused to endure oppression because of their beliefs or gender. The spirit of Terence MacSwiney is the conductor of the play and also the character of Maggie Thatcher is the voice of the fading tyrannical British empire. Music at the start and end is 'Shall My Soul Pass Through Old Ireland' a ballad (to the air of Kevin Barry) written in honour of MacSwiney after his death on Hunger-strike in 1920.

DRAMA CONSISTS OF THREE CHARACTERS: SINGER, TERENCE MacSWINEY AND MAGGIE THATCHER WHO IS DRESSED IN FULL BRIT

UNIFORM HAND BAG IN ONE HAND AND GUN IN THE OTHER. GREY OR BLACK BACKDROP: A BLANKET LYING ON FLOOR AND A TABLE WHERE MAGGIE SETS BAG AND GUN DOWN.

THE SINGER ENTERS FIRST WEARING A LONG WHITE SILK FLOWING DRESS SINGING 'SHALL MY SOUL PASS THROUGH OLD IRELAND'.

SINGER In a dreary Brixton prison/ where an Irish rebel lay/ By his side a priest was standing/ 'Ere his soul should pass away/ And he faintly murmured, 'Father'/ as he clasped him by the hand/ 'Tell me this before I leave you/ Shall my soul pass through Ireland?'/ Twas for loving dear old Ireland/ in this prison cell I lie/ 'Twas for loving dear old Ireland/ In this foreign land I die/ will you meet my little daughter/ will you make her understand/ but, Father, tell me 'ere I leave you/ shall my soul pass through Ireland?/ Then sixty one years later/ in the H Blocks dreary cells/ died another 10 brave soldiers/ each one a hero through and through/ for time has not changed the hunger/ for an Ireland that is free/ from the bondage that enslaves us/ from across the Irish sea.

TERENCE MAC SWINEY WALKS SLOWLY TO RIGHT HAND SIDE OF STAGE HE STOPS AND LOOKS DOWN AT BLANKET ON FLOOR AND THEN TALKS TO AUDIENCE:

TMS It is not those who can inflict the most, but, those that can suffer the most, who will conquer! And my dear friends and comrades that is the truth. For when we are imprisoned and are defenceless and yet want to fight on for the cause that we believe with all our heart and soul to be a just and right cause, then our only weapon is resistance! We resist every attempt made to call our cause 'criminal'. I went on hunger- strike knowing that the weaponry of the hunger-strike would hurt no body other than my own; of course my family also felt my pain (pause) and I was saddened by that. It is the most cruel of deaths that any man or woman can inflict upon themselves. And yet any man can ask 'Why'. At the time I felt confident that my death would do more to smash the British Empire than my release would. And I was right. The hunger-strike does not belong solely to the Irish nor was it fashioned by the Irish; did not Christ himself fast in the desert for 40 days in preparation for what lay ahead? I say, the hunger-strike belongs to all who seek what is right when their hands have been tied and their mouth gagged by the weapon of oppression and injustice. There are twenty two of us in all, from

Ireland, who fasted until death; death, a cruel, heartless death that we kept at bay for as long as possible and in the end it held no fear that we as soldiers could not overcome. (Pause and change of mood) Thomas Ashe, in 1917: Dr KATHLEEN LYNN had her finger on his pulse as he died after 5 days of hunger strike. He was force-fed by the British; his lung punctured and death came quickly. Two days later, the British conceded to political status for all the republican prisoners held in Mountjoy. At his graveside a volley was fired and Collins in full military uniform declared that the volley of shots was the only tribute necessary over the grave of a dead fenian; and I agreed!

MAGGIE THATCHER WALKS OUT ON STAGE OVER TO TABLE LOOKS AT HAND GUN BEFORE SETTING IT ON TABLE. SPEAKS TO AUDIENCE (THEY REPRESENT IRISH NATION)

MT (Raising her arm) If they want to die – then let them! The iron fist is mightier than any weapon. Remember Woodrow Wilson one of the greatest presidents of America, he came to Dublin in 1919 and preferred to take heed of us rather than listen to your babble about Ireland and independence; (Says slowly) Yes – 200,000 signatures meant less to him than one British minister's opinion. He wouldn't touch your petition! Yes we were able to ban the Dail – if an American president wouldn't listen then what government would listen to an ungrateful bunch of Irish rebels!

TMS Three of us died in October 1920 all 3 of us from Cork. MICHAEL FITZGERALD after 67 days died on 17th and then JOSEPH MURPHY and myself died on the 25th just a few hours apart. It was a tough time for Cork, but even tougher for our families. People remember my name. I believe that is because, I was at the time of my death the Lord Mayor of Cork; I was of no more importance than my comrades MICK and JOE, and I was loved no more nor less than they; but to have the title of Lord Mayor gave me a prominence in name only of course; for we all died willingly for the same cause. I prayed for MICK and JOE, and I know they prayed for me!

MT (Shouting) Crime is crime is crime; it is not political; because I say so; and I tell you, you will never win a war with this country because we are too skilled at putting people down; and keeping them there! And that is our fortitude our skill at keeping people down!

TMS 1923 was a terrible year for Ireland. We had killed one another for more than a year and now we were so divided we watched as another 3 brave men died on hunger-strike. The first from Wexford; JOE WITTY, JOE died on September 2nd and then within two days of each other two Cork men DENIS BARRY and ANDY O SULLIVAN died on the 20th and 22nd of November. They all died in jails run by our own people who were these brave men's former comrades.

MT Divide and conquer; divide and rule; divide and make your enemy your tool.

TMS Then the 40's. There were still republican prisoners and surprisingly DEV who was head of the Fíanna Fáil government refused to give the prisoners political status and so another 3 good men died: TONY D'ARCY from Galway, JACK MC NEELA a Mayo man they both died in April 1940 and (points finger at audience) then you all know the other fellow he was one of your own SEAN MC CAUGHEY, his grave's in Milltown; SEAN served 5 years of torture in Portlaoise and after his 16th day without food he went on thirst strike and died a terrible death on the 23rd day of his fast. So on 11th of May 1946 Sean was met by myself and the others to be welcomed into the arms of JESUS.

MT Northern Ireland is as British as Finchley; because I say so!

LIFTING HER GUN SHE OPENS HER BAG AND PLACES GUN INSIDE. CLOSES THE BAG FIRMLY THEN SAYS:

Continues:

An Armalite in one hand and the ballot box in the other; who do they think they are? Britian! Indeed, it was FREDERICK The Great who said, "diplomacy without arms is like music without instruments" and I agree! In trying times "the truth is that it is only our military measures which will produce a diplomatic response". And the I.R.A./Sinn Féin are of the opinion that this applies to them; but it can't and it won't; because I say so. This strategy is a British strategy. Not an Irish strategy; because I say so!

TMS How sad! – hunger-strikes did not end there – and Ireland was still not free! 1970's saw another 2 brave men die on hunger-strike! MICHAEL GAUGHAN in '74 and FRANK STAGG in '76: Both died in British prisons. Their names forever mentioned in the same breath; it is hard to think of one

without the other. Both Mayo men were to be eventually buried together, no thanks to the Fine Gael/Labour coalition government, as they did everything in their power to prevent FRANK being buried in the republican plot at Ballina beside his comrade, as he had expressly wished. Five tons of cement was poured over his grave. Eventually a tunnel was dug and FRANK'S remains were reinterred in the republican plot. Now, just something to mention; did you know that the actual tricolour draped over MICHAEL'S coffin was indeed the same flag that was draped over mine? Well, now you know!

MT (Staring at audience) No – I did not think of anyone or anything when my own son MARK was lost in the desert. Lost and without food and possibly without water – No – I've said I did not think that awful thought – that perhaps this was the gods sending their vengeance upon my family. I did not think that for I do not think like that, and, in any case, I was never that kind of a mother to think such things.

TMS LIFTS THE BLANKET OFF THE FLOOR AND HOLDS IT FIRST TO HIS HEART AND THEN OPENS IT AND DRAPES IT AROUND HIS PERSON LIKE A BLANKET MAN.

TMS This blanket is my tongue for it can talk in a way that is wordless. You look at this blanket and you know, you just know – exactly what it means. When the prisoner was brought to you on a visit, you didn't see the blanket, but you knew it was there and what it stood for. Always lurking at the back of your mind that, when the visit was over, that The Blanket was all that was waiting for him as he left the 30 minutes of half realities back to the horror of H. Block reality. The screws – they knew what it stood for. That was why they preferred the prisoners to be uniformed. Stamped. Registered. Defeated. Crawling for mercy. Their mercy. Nakedness touched and honoured truth; there was such beauty in that. To wear the blanket proudly that was the victory. For they wore it unashamedly. Then the hunger-strike. It came as a natural conclusion. The end of a night-mare; and for the ten brave men, the beginning of a different type of night-mare because they did not enter into their fast alone; they brought with them the eternal pain of their families. One by one they went with hope in their heart and they died

still with that hope intact, and their hope did not disappoint them, for now at last they were free.

KIERAN DOHERTY, MICHAEL DEVINE, FRANCIS HUGHES, JOE MC DONNELL, KEVIN LYNCH, BOBBY SANDS, THOMAS MC ELWEE, PATSY O'HARA, MARTIN HURSON, RAYMOND MC CREESH

LIGHTS DIM (BUT NOT OUT) SINGER ENTERS SINGING

. It's 30 years now since they left us/ and this we know is true/ as their souls passed through Ireland/ their spirit stayed with me and you/ and in each morrow's evening/ when all is quiet/before the dawn/ we remember all our comrades/ from I.R.A. to Cumman na bman/ But we're here tonight to honour/ with an overflowing of pride/ those brave men of '81/ who for you and me they died!

Shall my soul pass through old Ireland, pass through Ulster's green green fields/ shall I see all my family as they kneel and pray for me/ tell me father 'er I leave you / for this I pray sincere/ will they love and cherish still/ the ideals I held so dear/ will you comfort all my comrades/and tell them this from me/ that one day our country Ireland/ from the British will be free!

END:

ULSTER BLOOD ON SPANISH FIELDS

I was asked to write this short piece of drama by Sam White from Castlereagh Community group East Belfast. In conjunction with the Short Strand they were holding a day of events to remember jointly those from each community who went to fight for democracy in Spain against Franco. The men mentioned are Liam (William) Tumlinson from east Belfast and Jim Stranny from west Belfast. They were both united in their vision of a better world for the working man/woman and for the poor everywhere by standing up to the greedy power of capitalism.

Cast:

Liam (son)

Margaret (mother)

Scene is placed at kitchen table where mother is seated peeling potatoes. The son is standing over to left. She is thinking back to a dream she had

prior to Liam's death in Spain. He tells her his intentions of going to fight in Spain on the Republican side. Then subsequently, he tells her how he died.

MY OWN MAN

LIAM My name was WILLIAM TUMLINSON
in east Belfast I grew to be a man and have a mind
that belonged to me alone.
I didn't care for manipulation or sectarianism
on any coat I wore, to fight for the rights of the working man
was the only oath I swore!
for I was my own man
and led only by what I knew to be right
that was how JIM STRANNY and myself joined in
the anti-fascist fight.
It mattered not to me, a man, that we didn't win
for I fought and died a better man than those
that didn't think of how the fascist whores
could make a whole world sink
We spilled our blood for every man every woman and every child
not just in Spain nor here at home
but in every heart at every dawn
and for every free speech made. For man should not be condemned to be
the slave of slaves!

MOTHER (peeling potatoes) I knew he was up to somethin, I just knew, it was the way he avoided sittin and havin his smoke into the fire after his dinner that last week, for he used to say just sittin there 'ah ma you know there's nothin like a smoke after your belly's full', and I'd always say back 'sure WILLIAM, isn't life good to us when we can have nearly enough to eat and a bit of a fire to keep us warm, and you and your smoke, you're like a gent sittin there son, my son a gentleman. (smiling then serious) It was the Friday night he blurted it out. He was off to work in England. He picked up with a girl called KATHLEEN WALSH over there, a Dubliner she was; and then one night I had this dream about him, it didn't seem like a dream at the time, but it was only a dream. (looks over to where son is standing)

LIAM (without moving – looks at audience not mother) Ma I've somethin to tell ya.

MOTHER Son, if a daughter says that to her mother, it usually only means the one thing!

LIAM And a son, what does it mean when a son says it?

MOTHER It means only one thing when a son says it, a different thing, but the one thing! When will you be goin?

LIAM Early Monday, Ma.

MOTHER Liverpool

LIAM Well – that's my first stop.....then

MOTHER London?

LIAM No ma, it's Spain!

MOTHER Spain, what type of work will ya be gettin there son? Sure they don't build houses there they only grow stuff!

LIAM There's a war just started there Ma, and I'm goin, me and STRANNY are headin there to help strike a blow for democracy.

MOTHER You and STRANNY. Sure didn't you learn anything from that time you and STRANNY led the wreath at CONNOLLY'S grave and then you all marched to Bodenstown and you were all chased by the I.R.A. Tipperary men, they didn't want you there. They wouldn't accept men from the Shankill Road! Am I not right son!

LIAM It wasn't that they didn't want us there Ma, that was just ignorance; for we wrote on our banner new sentiments for Ulster – "UNITE PROTESTANT, CATHOLIC AND DISSENTER TO BREAK THE CONNECTION WITH CAPITALISM". And I think that was what frightened them! They want a united Ireland free from Britain; what we want is a united people free from capitalist control.

MOTHER He stud there talkin like a politician; I thought to myself that CRAIG up at Stormont could be doin with someone like my WILLIAM; and I said it to him, I said "WILLIE, won't you stay at home and help me and your

own instead of goin off to help Roman Catholics in Spain? Ulster needs you and men like you.

LIAM Ma that's the whole point, Ulster doesn't want one's like me and STRANNY, we don't agree with the sectarian politics; we'll always be outsiders as long as sectarianism is allowed to flourish here. Ask BETTY SINCLAIR, SAM HASLETT OR HARRY MIDGLEY about how sectarian politics has ruined us and continues to ruin the very sinews of our people even as they're bein born.

MOTHER And then he left, and I remembered word for word that dream the next morning and I thought it had been real and I thought to myself that he wouldn't have much to take with him; a shirt or two and the trousers he stud in.....and the socks. It wasn't a dream at all, it was a premonition. And then came the word that he was dead. That terrible, terrible word. And for what did my son die? They lost! But some have said that he died well. But how can a mother reconcile her child dyin well in a war that was not of his own makin. All wars are the same as far as mothers are concerned. I thought and thought of how it was for my WILLIAM, my wonderful son WILLIE. I've seen him stand in fields and feel the breeze and the hot sun caress his lovely face as I did when he was just my wee boy.

LIAM Ma, there is always this gentle breeze that carries the perfume of Wild Thyme across this battlefield where I fear that maybe I will die. I never thought of dying far from you or my lovely KATHLEEN. This place is called Jarama and it's not too far from Madrid. I have joined The Connolly Column and my comrades are men like myself who could not watch as this flame of evil takes hold of Europe and our world. Listen out for the name HITLER and be afraid! My comrade CHARLIE DONNELLY before he died said "even the Olives are bleeding". There is no need for you to worry as I know what I'm about.

MOTHER I have no letters only what's written in my memory; I was happy to learn that he'd found love with Kathleen Walsh, a lovely girl who shared his passion for freedom and justice; so that is a comfort of a sort to me his mother. (pause) One day I saw that painting.... Guernica.... by PICASSO.... and it spoke more than any words could ever have spoken about the horror of war. (slightly aggressive) I was WILLIAM'S mother and I still wish he'd

never gone.

END

TOM

By

Roseleen Walsh

This short drama is about the Irish Patriot, Tom Williams, who was hanged in the Crumlin Road Gaol on September 2nd 1942. Tom was sentenced to death for the murder of Patrick Murphy, an R.U.C. officer, who was shot dead while pursuing an I.R.A. active service unit in the Clonard area of Belfast, five months earlier. Tom was also shot in the incident and at the time told by an RUC doctor that he was going to bleed to death. As the officer in command Tom took full responsibility for the operation in a gallant attempt to lessen the sentence his comrades would receive.

This drama was commissioned by The National Graves Association and is being staged in the actual wing from where Tom Williams walked calmly to his death. The Belfast N.G.A. have requested that the drama be approximately 20 minutes, so I hope I have succeeded to inform and present the facts and supposition to a level of understanding and appreciation.

The drama takes place in the Crumlin Road Jail on the actual wing where Tom Williams was imprisoned and executed by hanging. From inside Tom's cell in C wing we hear voice-overs of: the trial Judge, Edward Sullivan Murphy (originally from Dublin) who passed sentence, the solicitor D.P. Marrinan and Fr Alexis, who accompanied Tom to the gallows and one of the warders whose duty it was to stay with Tom at all times leading up to his execution. Also, in order to have the same sound level I think it best to record the actor (Tom) singing to warders in the cell rather than singing live. (Antrim's Patriot Dead 1779-1953 by Seamus Steele page 65: "Tom sang to his warder audience") Order of recorded sounds and of V/O's:

Gun shots

Death Knell (3 rings)

Tom....."I am not guilty of murder"

Death knell (3 rings)

Judge passing sentence: The jury have found each (Dublin accent)

Solicitor announcing appeal: Before leaving this court on behalf of my 6 clients

Death knell (3 rings)

Solicitor reading reprieve statement: I have good news.....His Grace the Governor

TOM to solicitor "Thanks for your thoughtfulness"

Death Knell

Solicitor dictating letter to his secretary

Death Knell then keys rattling and cell door slamming

Solicitor reading letter to Governor of N.Ireland about reprieve.

Death Knell (3 rings)

TOM (talking and singing to warders)

Right now you warders 'God save Ireland' God save Ireland cried the heroes.....last chorus is joined by other males singing.....

Warder (talking to Tom) TOM.....I'd like you to keep this prayer book.....

Rosary said outside of prison by crowd; loyalists jeering

Death Knell (3 rings)

Priest's quote: He was marvellous, a proper saint.....

Tom's quote (with echo) "Carry on no matter what.....

Scene begins with a céili dance. Tom is dancing with a girl, music is played by fiddler in back ground. The dance ends and girl disappears into cell door behind her, Tom walks to back of railings where his 5 comrades are standing, the sound of gun shots are heard, then an R.U.C. man walks from left side and escorts the 6 men into cell. (Tom has been wounded and is helped by the other men) After a moments silence Tom speaks in voice-over. (It is important to have all V-O's at same volume, so not reasonable to have Tom speak in real time)

The Death Knell rings 3 times

TOM V/O "I am not guilty of murder. I am not afraid to die. There was no premeditation and I wish to thank my counsel"

The Death Knell rings 3 time and then voice/over of trial judge Murphy is heard:

JUDGE V/O "The jury have found each and every one of you guilty of the wilful murder of Constable Patrick Murphy and I don't intend to say anything to you that would add to the horror of the position in which you find yourselves. The sentence and judgement of the court are, and it is hereby ordered, that you Henry Cordner and you William J. Perry, John Terence Oliver, Patrick Simpson and you Joseph Cahill, and you Thomas J. Williams, that you, and all of you, be taken from the bar of the court in which you now stand to the prison from whence you now came, and that on Tuesday , the eighteenth of August, in the year of our Lord, one thousand, nine hundred and forty two, you be taken to the place of execution of the gaol in which you are confined, and then and there be hanged by the neck until you are dead and that your bodies be buried within the walls of the prison, within which the aforesaid judgement of death be executed upon you, and pray the Lord almighty have mercy on your souls".

DEATH KNELL RINGS 3 TIMES

SOLIC V/O Before leaving this court house on behalf of my clients, the 6 accused, who have all truthfully stated that there was no premeditation in the killing of Constable Murphy, I hereby put in an appeal immediately to have the death penalty commuted and replaced with a less severe sentence.

DEATH KNELL RINGS 3 TIMES: KEYS JINGLE AND CELL DOOR OPENS

SOLIC V/O I've good news for everybodyexcept TOM. (pause) HARRY.....JOE.....JOHN ...PAT.....JIMMY (pause) you've been reprieved; you won't face execution. (pause) What can I tell you TOM except I'm so sorry, we explored every avenue.....I'm sorry. This is the statement they've issued today and dated 30th August 1942: His Grace the Governor of Northern Ireland has considered the cases of THOMAS JOSEPH WILLIAMS, WILLIAM J. PERRY, HENRY CORDNER, JOHN TERENCE OLIVER, JOSEPH CAHILL and PATRICK SIMPSON, previously lying under sentence of death in H.M. Prison Belfast and has decided; That in the case of THOMAS JOSEPH WILLIAMS, the law must take its own course; That in the case of W.J.PERRY, H.CORDNER, J.T. OLIVER, and J.CAHILL, sentence of death shall be commuted to one of penal servitude

for life; and that in the case of PATRICK SIMPSON sentence of death should be commuted to penal servitude of 15 years.

TOM V/O "Thanks for your thoughtfulness Mr MARRINAN we couldn't have asked for a better solicitor than yourself.....(then speaking to the others) *Boys, "Don't grieve for me, remember, from day one this is how I wanted it. I wanted to die and I'm happy that you five are going to live"

*Tom didn't use the word 'boys' at the beginning of his quote, I have used it to clarify to whom he is speaking to in V/O.

DEATH KNELL RINGS 3 TIMES

AS EACH NAME IS READ OUT THE PRISONER WALKS OUT FROM THE CELL AND BRINGS HIMSELF TO ATTENTION IN FRONT OF AUDIENCE. WHEN LETTER IS FINISHED, TOM STEPS FORWARD AND DISMISSES THE OTHER 5 WHO THEN MARCH INTO THE CELL NEXT TO THE ONE THEY CAME OUT FROM. TOME LINGERS A WHILE BEFORE RETURNING BACK INTO THE CONDEMNED CELL.

SOLIC V/O CECILIA, I want to hand deliver this letter personally when you finish typing, address it to (pause) His Grace The Most Noble The Duke of Abercorn.(say dot) K.(dot) G., (dot comma) K.(dot) P.,(dot comma) Home Office Belfast dated 28th August 1942.

Your Grace, I would like to bring some facts to your notice which are not generally known about the six condemned youths.

JOHN OLIVER is aged twenty one. His father is dead and he is an only child. He was a Painter in constant employment up to the date of this tragedy on Easter Sunday the 5th April 1942. He never had any previous trouble with the Police. He was a Warden in the A.R.P. attached to Post 124 Springfield Road, Belfast. Full stop new paragraph.

JOSEPH CAHILL was aged twenty-one on Easter Sunday and is the eldest of a family of nine. His father is a Printer in Belfast and his son was engaged in this occupation for about two years after leaving St. Mary's Christian Brothers School. He joined the Belfast Civil Defence Organisation about six months prior to Easter Sunday. His record is clear of all serious offences. Full stop new paragraph.

HENRY CORDNER is aged nineteen. His father is dead and his mother resides at 35, Malcomson Street, Belfast. There are five in this family. It

seems that after the death sentence had been passed on this youth the mother fainted and she is now completely distracted and thinks that her son has yet to be tried. This boy was in the employment of Messrs. Short & Harland, up to the time of this offence. He was a member of the A.R.P. Post 122 and contributed largely to his mother's support. His father fought with the British Forces in the last War and died from wounds received at the Dardanelles. His brother is a Private in the British Army stationed somewhere in Northern Ireland. Full stop and new paragraph.

THOMAS JOSEPH WILLIAMS was aged eighteen years on Easter Sunday. His father was a Corporal in the British Army in the last War and I am informed that he is now a Sergeant Major in the Eire Army. His brother is a Private in the Eire Air Force. His mother died thirteen years ago and he is living with his grandmother, Mrs. Mary Fay, aged 70. His two sisters are dead. He was a member of the A.R.P. post 123 and was in constant employment as a House Repairer up to Easter Sunday. His police record is clear. Full stop new paragraph.

PATRICK JOSEPH SIMPSON is aged eighteen. His father and mother are alive. He is the youngest of a family of three and was employed as a Sheet Metal Worker up to Easter Sunday. He was in the A.R.P. t 123. His father is a Group Warden and is employed in Hughes' Bakery Belfast. He has no record. Full stop and new paragraph.

WILLIAM JAMES PERRY is aged twenty-one. His father and mother are alive, and there are three of a family. His father is employed in an Engineering Firm in London doing important war work. This boy had various jobs in Belfast and was engaged in building Air Raid Shelters up to Easter Sunday. His record is clear. Full stop and new paragraph.

All the accused stated that they had no intention of shooting anyone and that they were very sorry that Constable Murphy was killed. It is obvious that these young men were dismayed and distressed when they heard that death had occurred.

Your Grace can see that the average age of the prisoners is a little over nineteen years. In all the circumstances I would ask Your Grace to give the greatest possible consideration to the many pleas lodged with your for mercy. Yours respectfully, Desmond P. Marrianan. (Slight pause) As quickly as you can, Cecilia, and please God, this will do some good.

DEATH KNELL RINGS 3 TIMES: KEYS RATTLE AND CELL DOOR SLAMS CLOSED

SOLIC V/O TOM, this was my last attempt earlier today to get your sentence commuted, but the Governor of Northern Ireland won't even see me, nevertheless I hand delivered the letter which reads: 'You will pardon my further note. It has been reported to me that your attention should be directed to the fact that depositions proved that THOMAS J. WILLIAMS before the police actually entered the room upstairs where the six were, had ordered his comrades to lay down their arms, the result, in all humane probability being that the lives of the police who shortly afterwards entered the room, were saved. I am requesting that this saving fact should be borne in mind to the youth's credit'.

DEATH KNELL (3 RINGS)

TOM V/O (with echo) Right now you warders, eleven o'clock, one more hour and then another eight and I'll be gone.....so I suppose this will be the last time you'll have to put up with my singing (laughs) this is a special time and so I am going to sing a song I learned on my grandma Fays knee and it's ironic really just listen to the words.....it was written for 3 brave men, ALLEN, LARKIN and O 'BRIEN, all three hanged and known thereafter as the Manchester Martyrs. (sings God Save Ireland)

High upon the gallows tree swung the noble-hearted Three.
By the vengeful tyrant stricken in their bloom;
But they met him face to face, with the courage of their race,
And they went with souls undaunted to their doom.

Chorus

"God save Ireland!" said the heroes;

"God save Ireland!" said they all.

"Whether on the scaffold high

Or the battlefield we die,

O, what matter when for Erin dear we fall!"

(Chorus repeated with other male voices joining in)

MALE V'S "God save Ireland!" said the heroes;

"God save Ireland!" said they all.

"Whether on the scaffold high

Or the battle field we die,
O, what matter when for Erin dear we fall!"

V/O GUARD You've a few hours TOM, stretch your legs out there in the wing, I'll sit here and rest a while TOM, go on son; you haven't changed your mind about breakfast TOM? You should take something!

TOM V/O The last thing I want to touch my lips is the Sacred Host at communion when I receive the body and blood of my God during mass. (slight pause) I'd like you to keep this prayer book when I'm finished with it, you have been good to me and I appreciate that.

TOM WALKS OUT TO WING WITH PRAYER BOOK IN HAND AND PRAYS WITH IT, SUDDENLY HE LOOKS ACROSS THE WING TO CELL FACING WHERE HE SEES A VISION OF HIS MOTHER SITTING ON A CHAIR. HE ISN'T STARTLED AS THEY LOOK INTO ONE ANOTHER'S EYES BEFORE SPEAKING.

MOTHER My boy, my poor poor boy. I'm here to be with you. My brave boy. Are you afraid son?

TOM (Shaking his head) What's there to be afraid off mother dear! (whispers) I knew you'd come. I needed you to be here. Will you stay with me mother, will you walk with me and hold my hand? (opens his hand and puts it towards her) I always felt you near me any time when I was afraid; all the asthma attacks when I was small; I was afraid then, I used to think that I would die and leave grandma FAY broken hearted; but Gods good, I survived, and our RICHARD, he was never sick, he was the opposite to me. (Smiling) I knew God would let you look after me, and now you're here and I can see you. You look as lovely as I always dreamed you were. I was only 3 when you.....you went.....but I remember things like smells, fresh cut grass and hot sunny days and melting lollipops all over my pram, things like that remind me of you mother dear. I don't even know if the memories were real or not because I kept them all to myself so no one could take them away and tell me they never happened. I'm glad I kept those memories!

MOTHER Yes, TOM, we go for walks in the Falls Park, you in the tan-sad and Richard would walk along holding on to the side; I remember the grass freshly cut, that smell of grass and the roses.....you were a happy

baby TOM.....my baby. My dear mother has done a good job and I thank God for that; and our CHARLIE and ALICE may they be blessed always for their kindness to you son. And your father Tom, he did his best. It wasn't easy for him.

TOM I know dear mother, I know. I love him dearly. I've written to uncle CHARLIE and asked him to give father, RICHARD and grandma my sincerest love. I didn't write today to grandma because I was afraid of causing her more pain, it was so hard to see her this morning, she was broken-hearted. I pray to God that they will accept my fate and be proud of me and live their lives well and not let my death bring bitterness or resentment to them. My whole life, mother dear, since my earliest teenage years has been spent in preparation for this coming dawn; I don't mean my death on the gallows, no, not that at all, but, my life as a sacrifice for the freedom of my beloved country, Ireland. I am not the first and I won't be the last to die a death such as this because, when the flame is lit, it takes more than an ocean full of water to put it out. I can only be who I am, I can't pretend to give my allegiance to a country that came here and took our land and persecuted our people, in order that I should get a good job or the promise of one. I am Irish, I am a republican and I have done what had to be done in the name of freedom. Certainly, mother dear, I am sorry that a life was taken, but many lives were taken in the past and many more lives un-lived because of the British theft and oppression of our country. Even DEV has turned on us; under pressure sure he told his boys in government to intervene on our behalf, even though in March GEORGE PLANT was executed in Portlaoise. De Valera pays lip service when it suits him.

MOTHER I know son, your comrade, SEAN McCAUGHEY from Ardoyne who was arrested this very day one year ago, lies clad only in a blanket in the most inhumane conditions in Portlaoise prison, he needs your prayers son and the O'CALLAGHAN family from Cavendish St they need your prayers; they're heart-broken at the abuse of their beloved GERARD'S body after the R.U.C. shot him, like yourself son he loved his daily mass and had no fear of death. (Whispers) You'll be with him soon.

TOM It's a very strange feeling I have mother dear, you have brought a feeling of calm to me, and soon, in a few hours, I shall be free. Free from

everything that ever imprisoned me. I'll calmly walk to my death and I thank God that I didn't have long to wait for it, unlike MacSWEENEY, D'ARCY and McNEELA, they died slow tortuous deaths on hunger-strike, at least I've been spared that. I'm surrounded by my comrades so I know I die not alone, I die only in my body, my comrades will bring alive my spirit in their hearts and in their songs and in everything they do for Ireland. Not only am I surrounded by my comrades here but I feel the closeness of the women in Armagh who have fought the good fight shoulder to shoulder with us all from our beloved 'C' company Belfast Brigade.

Death knell (rings 3 times)

MOTHER The priests have arrived son, it's almost time. Let us pray a simple prayer together and then know that I'll be beside you till the end.

TOM (Smiling) Grandma taught me how to join my hands to pray and told me to always keep them pointed upwards because even if I couldn't think of the right words to say that my feelings and longings would go straight up to God and he would receive them and that was as good as saying a prayer out loud.

BOTH (In unison) Oh my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended thee, who art so infinitely good and I fervently resolve by the help of thy holy grace never more to offend thee again.

TOM Oh Lord, help and protect my poor country and let my death serve as the last sacrifice to be offered for our freedom as a united people and a great nation. Amen. God save Ireland!

The Death Knell (ring 3 times as TOM turns and walks back into cell)

IN THE DISTANCE THE ROSARY IS HEARD FROM THE CROWDS IN THE STREET, SOME JEERING IN BACK (IF POSSIBLE) OF LOYALISTS DRUMS AND SHOUTING AND SINGING 'ROLL OUT THE BARREL

CELL DOOR OPENS PRIEST WALKS OUT FOLLOWED BY TOM, DEATH KNELL RINGS 8 TIMES. PRIEST IS READING FROM SMALL BIBLE, TOM WALKS HEAD ERECT, GLANCES ACROSS AS MOTHER IS WALKING PARALLEL TO HIM STEP BY STEP. THEY MOVE TO BACK OF WING WHERE A WHITE SHEET HANGS AND BEHIND IT IS THE HANGING

ROPE, TOM WALKS TO ROPE AND STANDS STILL WITH HIS HEAD
HELD HIGH

PRIEST V/O (Fr ALEXIS) "I met the bravest of the brave this morning. Tom Williams walked to that scaffold without a tremor in his body. The only people who were shaking were us and the hangman. I've one other thing to say to you. Don't pray for TOM WILLIAMS, pray to him, for at this moment TOM is a saint in heaven".

TOM V/O (With echo) Well dear Hugh I'll close with a message to Oglai na hEireann, "To carry on, no matter what the odds are against you, to carry on no matter what torments are inflicted on you. The road to freedom is paved with suffering, hardships and torture, carry on my gallant and brave comrades until that certain day."

END:

By

Roseleen Walsh©2013

This is the second volume of 'Political Drama' consisting of eleven new plays which include the revised script of TOM which I originally wrote in 2013. I begin by including the revised version of TOM which came about as a result of being approached several times to stage TOM in different venues. I thought TOM as it was would not be as effective anywhere other than in a prison setting. Finally, I agreed to stage TOM for St Galls GAC and so decided to include some of the other republicans who had met with the same fate as Tom Williams himself: Death on the gallows. The revised version of the drama was very successful thanks to the wonderful actors and everyone involved in the production. I think it was a very happy time for us all. Between the cast and production team there were at least twenty people aged between 70 years down to 16 years involved. We were strangers who became friends and also from very diverse political backgrounds which made the whole experience such a fantastic summer in 2014.

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TOM (extended).....
DIVIS STREET RIOTS 1964.....
TWO EAST BELFAST MOTHERS.....

GUARD OF HONOUR.....
THE VIGIL.....
A BRIEF CONVERSATION BETWEEN WINNIE CARNEY AND
SIOBHÁN O'HANLON.....
OUR OWN IRISH CULTURE.....
THE PRICE OF AN EASTER LILY.....
THE CLARKES:1916.....
WINNIE & GEORGE & THEIR OPPOSING POLITICS.....

TOM: LASTS APPROXIMANTLY ONE HOUR AND TWENTY MINUTES.

Cast:

Mary Ann Mc Cracken (Narrator).....

Singer.....

.....

Kevin Barry (first of the 10 IRA members to be hanged in Mountjoy Jail and
thereafter known as the forgotten ten)

Patrick Maher, Edmund Foley, Patrick Moran, Thomas Whelan,

Thomas Bryan, Patrick Doyle, Frank Flood, Bernard Ryan,

Thomas Traynor.....

Roddy

McCorley.....

Roger

Casement.....

Michael O'Brien (Manchester Martrys3)

William Philip Allen

Michael Larkin.....

Tom Williams

Tom's Mother

Judge

Solicitor

Prison guard

Priest

R.U.C. man

Prisoners with TOM.....Cahill, Oliver, Cordiner, Simpson, Perry.
Irish dancers and fiddle player, Drummer boy (as TOM marches to scaffold)

TOM

Scene opens in darkness. There are two podiums on/side of stage for MARY ANN (left) and male characters (right) First, second and last verse of the song Henry Joy is sung:

SINGER An Ulster man I am proud to be, from the Antrim Glens I come.
Although I labour by the sea I have followed fife and drum.
I have heard the martial tramp of men, I've seen them fight and die; and it's well that I remember when I followed Henry Joy.
I pulled my boat in from the sea and I hid my sails away.
I hung my nets upon a tree and I scanned the moonlit bay.
The boys were out and the redcoats too, I kissed my wife goodbye
And there in the shade of a green leafy glade I followed Henry Joy.
In Belfast town they built a tree and the redcoats mustered there.
I saw him come to the beat of a drum rolled out on the barracks
Square. He kissed his sister and went aloft and bade his last goodbye, and as he died I turned and I cried. 'They have murdered Henry Joy'.

Lights go on podium (left) where MARY ANN MC CRACKEN is standing:
SHE BEGINS:

That song in part tells the story of my brother HENRY JOY McCRACKEN. He was a true Presbyterian like our grandfather on mothers' side, FRANCIS JOY, you never met him did you? (Looks up) But you do know the Belfast paper, News Letter, well our grandpa founded it. He was also a good man. Our brother believed as I believed that true peace and equality could only ever be achieved here in Ireland with the removal of the British presence. You know one day my brother, our HENRY JOY, along with WOLF TONE, SAMUEL NEILSON, ROBERT SIMMS AND THOMAS RUSSELL climbed the Cave Hill and at MC Art's Fort they vowed not to desist in their efforts until they had subverted the authority of England and asserted Ireland's independence. Now, to cut a very long story short, which really is a pity, my poor brother, poor not because he had no money, in fact we were a wealthy family, but poor because his life ended so tragically when he was arrested and brought before a court martial down in Ann Street Artillery Barracks and

taken from there, though it need not have ended like that, if he'd accepted the Crown prosecutor's offer to inform on his fellow insurgents, but we thank God that he declined, though that meant his imminent death. He was taken and hanged outside the old market house, which incidentally, was built on ground which our great great grandfather had given to the town there in Cornmarket. How's that for irony? Now.....why I'm here tonight.....is to talk about one particular young man, at least he was young when he died.....I want to share with you what happened on his last hours in Crumlin Road Goal, the night before he was hanged.....Maybe it's because he was the last of our beloved patriots to die in this inhumane way that I want to share it with you; but first, let us talk about some of the others who also met the same fate as my brother, our HENRY JOY.

LIGHTS ON STAGE: AFTER 2 SECONDS OF THE SONG, RODDY MCCORLEY MARCHES FROM BACK OF HALL UP TO STAGE . HE BRINGS HIMSELF TO ATTENTION AND FACES AUDIENCE

SINGER (RODDY MCCORLEY) See the fleet-foot host of men who speed with faces wan. From farmstead and from fisher's cot along the banks of Bann. They come with vengeance in their eye, too late, too late are they for RODDY MCCORLEY goes to die on the bridge of Toome today.

Ireland, mother Ireland, you love them still the best, those fearless brave who fighting fell upon your hapless breast, but never a one of all your dead more bravely fell in fray than he who marches to his fate on the bridge of Toome today.

Because he loved the motherland, because he loved the green he goes to meet the martyr's fate with proud and joyous mien. True to the last, true to the last he trod the upward way for young RODDY MCCORLEY goes to die on the bridge of Toome today.

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MARY ANN You all know the name of RODDY MCCORLEY. You know it perhaps because it was perpetuated by the famed poet ETHNA CARBERY (1864-1902) when she wrote the words to that famous ballad RODDY MCCORLEY; incidentally, ETHNA CARBERY was one of BOBBY SANDS'S favourite poets, in fact when BOBBY went on hunger-strike he asked for a copy of one of her poetry collections to be sent in to him before he would go

blind. Maybe it was ETHNA'S ballad in honour of RODDY that inspired BOBBY to write a poem himself about his hero; this is just one of the verses that BOBBY penned:

BOBBY SANDS WALK ONTO FLOOR CLAD IN BLANKET HAS PIECE OF TOILET PAPER AND PENCIL IN HAND

B.SANDS My greying mother, Tara the Pity, cut my silent father free, where he danced like a ship on an angry wave from yonder hanging tree and he felt no touch nor heard no scream, his deathly gaze a loss as he slumped into her cradled arms, like Christ did from the cross.

I am Rodaí of Duneane-MacCorlaí – Antrim born! This day in Toome I met my doom for an oath that I have sworn on yonder oak on Roughery Hill a jackdaw I have heard, it waits to steal my very soul, 'tis surely the devil's bird.

MARY ANN LOOKS UP AT AUDIENCE AND SAYS:

Is that not beautiful?

RORRY DISMISSES HIMSELF TURNS AND SITS ON STAGE STEP.
LIGHTS DIM.

SINGER (THE SMASHING OF THE VAN) AFTER 2 SECONDS OF SONG
THE 3 VOLUNTEERS MARCH FROM BACK OF HALL TO FRONT OF
STAGE: MICHAEL O'BRIEN, PHILIP ALLEN AND MICHAEL LARKIN
(Manchester Martyrs) THEY TURN BRINGING THEMSELVES TO
ATTENTION FACING AUDIENCE.

SINGER Attend you gallant Irishmen and listen for a while
I'll sing to you the praises of the sons of Erin's Isle
It's of those gallant heroes who voluntarily ran
To release two Irish Fenians from an English prison van.
On the eighteenth of September, it was a dreadful year,
When sorrow and excitement ran throughout all Lancashire
At a gathering of the Irish boys they volunteered each man,
To release those Irish prisoners out of the prison van.
With courage bold those heroes went and soon the van did stop,
They cleared the guards from back and front and then smashed in the top,
but in blowing open of the lock, they chanced to kill a man, so three must die
on the scaffold high for smashing of the van.

LIGHTS UP:

MARY ANN (Says poetically) You know them not, and yet their song, does it call something deep from within your soul to the surface; something that you alone can hear when Eire whispers in your dreams like the sound of dead leaves that rustle as they are carried away and scattered by a light breeze; their fragrance remain when sleep dissolves. Remember their names for they shall not pass this way again: LARKIN, ALLAN and O'BRIEN; from the year 1867.

THE 3 MEN STANDING TO ATTENTION FALL OUT AND SIT ON STEP OF STAGE.

LIGHTS DIM: ROGER CASEMENT AFTER 2 SECONDS OF SINGING WALKS, OCCASSIONALLY BOWING TO AUDIENCE FROM BACK OF HALL TO FRONT OF STAGE

SINGER (Lonely Banna Strand) 'Twas on Good Friday morning all in the month of May, A German ship was signalling beyond there in the Bay "We've twenty thousand riffles here, all ready for to land" But no answering signal came from the lonely Banna Strand.

A motor-car was dashing through the early morning gloom A sudden crash and in the stream they went to meet their doom two Irish lads lay dying there just like their hopes so grand they could not give the signal now from lonely Banna Strand.

They took Sir Roger prisoner and sailed for London town and in the Tower they laid him as a traitor to the Crown, said he "I am no traitor" but his trial he had to stand for bringing German rifles to the lonely Banna Strand.

LIGHTS ON:

MARY ANN Was it not enough that England should hang our brave ROGER CASEMENT? No, it was not enough for them; they wanted their pound of flesh, after all, they looked upon him as one of their own, having been Knighted for his exposure of the inhumanities to the African slaves in the rubber plantations of the Congo. So they lied about his deeds; but our revenge is the laughter of our children. Casement Park, which was so called to honour ROGER, is filled with the laughter of children whose potential is nurtured and encourage and developed under his monument which is that splendid Park.

ROGER TURNS AND SITS WITH OTHERS ON STAGE STEPS.
LIGHTS DIM: AFTER 2 SECONDS OF SONG KEVIN BARRY MARCHES
FROM BACK OF HALL UP ONTO STAGE

SINGER In Mountjoy jail one Monday morning
High upon the gallows tree,
Kevin Barry gave his young life
For the cause of liberty.

But a lad of eighteen summers,
Still there's no one can deny,
As he walked to death that morning,
He proudly held his head on high.

“Shoot me like a soldier.
Do not hang me like a dog,
For I fought to free old Ireland
On that still September morn.

Lads like Barry are no cowards.
From the foe they will not fly.
Lads like Barry will free Ireland,
For her sake they'll live and die.

LIGHTS UP:

KEVIN READS STATEMENT

KEVIN I Kevin Barry, of 58, South Circular Road, in the County of Dublin, Medical Student, aged 18 years and upwards solemnly and sincerely declare as follows: On the 20th of September, 1920 I was arrested in Upper Church Street by a Sergeant of the 2nd Duke of Wellington's Regiment and was brought under escort to the North Dublin Union, now occupied by military. I was brought into the guard room and searched. I was then moved to the defaulter's room by an escort with a Sergeant-Major, who all belonged to 1st Lancashire Fusiliers. I was then handcuffed. About 15 minutes after I was put into the defaulter's room, two Commissioned Officers of the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers came in. They were accompanied by 3 Sergeants of the same unit. A military policeman who had been in the room since I entered it remained. One of the officers asked me my name, which I

gave. He then asked me for the names of my companions in the raid. I refused to give them. He tried to persuade me to give the names and I persisted in refusing. He then sent a Sergeant for a bayonet. When it was brought in the Sergeant was ordered by this officer to point the bayonet at my stomach. The same questions as to the names and addresses of my companions were repeated with the same results. The sergeant was then ordered to turn my face to the wall and point the bayonet to my back. The Sergeant then said he would run the bayonet into me if I did not tell. The bayonet was then removed and I was turned round again. This officer then said that if I still persisted in this attitude he would turn me out to the men in the barrack square and he supposed I knew what that meant with the men in their present temper. I said nothing. He ordered the Sergeants to put me face down on the floor and twist my arm. I was pushed down onto the floor after my handcuffs were removed. When I lay on the floor one of the Sergeants knelt on the small of my back, the other two placed one foot each on my back and left shoulder and the man who knelt on me twisted my right arm, holding it by the wrist with one hand while he held my hair with the other to pull back my head. The arm was twisted from the elbow joint. This continued to the best of my knowledge for 5 minutes. It was very painful. The first officer was standing near my feet and the officer who accompanied him was still present. During the twisting of my arm the first officer continued to question me for the names and addresses of my companions and the names of my Company Commander or any other officer I knew. As I still refused to answer these questions I was let up and handcuffed. A civilian came in and he repeated the same questions with the same results. He informed me that if I gave all the information I knew, I could get off. I was then left in the company of the military policeman. The two officers, three sergeants and civilian all left together. I could certainly identify the officer who directed the proceedings and put the questions. I am not sure of the others except the Sergeant with the bayonet. My arm was medically treated by an officer of the Royal Army Medical Corps attached to the North Dublin Union the following morning and by the prison hospital orderly afterwards for 4 or 5 days. I was visited by the Court Martial Officer last night and he read the confirmation of sentence of death by hanging to be executed on Monday next and I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing same to

be true and by virtue of the Statutory Declarations Act, 1835. Declared and subscribed before me at Mountjoy Prison in the County of the City of Dublin, 28th October, 1920.

(Signed) Myles Keogh (a justice of the peace for said County)

KEVIN GERARD BARRY.

AT THIS POINT 9 MEN MARCH FROM BACK OF HALL UP TO STAGE AS KEVIN STEPS IN FRONT OF PODIUM AND BRINGS THE MEN TO ATTENTION IN IRISH:

KEVIN Complachí (Com-Placht) Aire (Air-Reh)

MARY ANN I know the story of Mountjoy so well, and yet, when I think of all the men who were hanged there as I do tonight, I feel the pain of it, as though it were happening now. Known as the 'Forgotten Ten' all executed in there: KEVIN in 1920: THOMAS WHELAN, PATRICK MORAN, THOMAS BRYAN, PATRICK DOYLE, FRANK FLOOD, BERNARD RYAN, THOMAS TRAYNOR, EDMUND FOLEY and PATRICK MAHER; from March to June 1921. I feel the grief of our nation as it strives to complete our journey to freedom, I feel the joy of a nation that still produces honourable and noble men and women who follow the call of our country's rightful claim to independence and self-determination. For this these men died. We may have had brave men, but, we'll never have better.

KEVIN STEPS FORWARD AND DISMISSES THE MEN IN IRISH, THEY ALL THEN SIT AT STAGE STEP.

KEVIN Company by the right quick march: Complachi, Do Réir Dheis, Go Mear Máirseáil. (Com-Placht, Doh Rare Yes, Go Mar Marshall)

SINGER (The Three Flowers) One time when walking down a lane, when night was drawing nigh, I met a cailin with 3 flowers, and she more young than I "St Patrick bless you, dear", said I, "if you will be quick and tell the place where you did find these flowers, I seem to know so well" She took and kissed the first flower once, and sweetly said to me: "This flower comes from the Wicklow hills, dew wet and pure", said she, "Its name is Michael ; Dwyer- the strongest flower of all: But I'll keep it fresh beside my breast though all the world shall fall" She took and kissed the next flower twice, and sweetly said to me "This flower I culled in Antrim fields, outside Belfast", said she "The name I call it is Wolfe Tone – the bravest flower of all; but I'll keep

it fresh beside my breast though all the world should fall". She took and kissed the next flower thrice, and softly said to me, "this flower I found in Thomas Street, in Dublin fair", said she. "Its name is Robert Emmet, the youngest flower of all; but I'll keep it fresh beside my breast though all the world should fall. Then Emmet, Dwyer and Tone I'll keep for I do love them all; and I'll keep them fresh beside my breast though all the world should fall".

MARY ANN And now we watch with heavy heart, the plight of the young I.R.A. volunteer, TOM WILLIAMS; but first let me remind you all of the Belfast of 1942. This was a time when Republicans were not allowed to openly display the flag of our country during the Easter Sunday commemorations on the nationalist Falls Road; and so to cause a diversion they planned an operation in the Clonard area and unfortunately it went badly wrong, resulting in the death of a pursuing R.U.C. man, Patrick Murphy, over who's armoured police van shots had been fired. TOM WILLIAMS was the officer in command of the I.R.A. unit and as he lay wounded himself he was told by the police doctor that he was bleeding to death. TOM then took full responsibility for his units operation. (Pause) So now let us all watch and wait..... least we ever forget.

LIGHTS DIM: ON FLOOR IN FRONT OF STAGE A CEILI IS TAKING PLACE. AFTER CEILI DANCE ONE DANCER (MALE) IS DOING A STEP DANCE AND EVERYONE IS GATHERED ROUND IN SEMI-CIRCLE CLAPPING HANDS IN TUNE WITH FIDLER. WHEN DANCE HAS FINISHED THE GROUP SCATTERS LEAVING TOM AND GIRLFRIEND ALONE, SHE PUTS TOM'S COAT ON AND LINGERS GIVING HIM A KISS ON THE CHEEK. GUNFIRE RINGS OUT AND SHE STEPS ASIDE AS HE RUNS TOWARDS THE SHOOTING. THE SHOOTING ENDS AS RUC MAN DISARMS 6 IRA VOLUNTEERS (WHICH INCLUDE TOM) THEY ARE MARCHED TO COURT ROOM (ON STAGE)

The Death Knell rings 3 times

TOM I am not guilty of murder. I am not afraid to die. There was no premeditation and I wish to thank my counsel.

THE DEATH KNELL RINGS 3 TIMES FOLLOWED BY JUDGE MURPHY'S ANNOUNCES:

JUDGE The jury have found each and every one of you guilty of the wilful murder of Constable Patrick Murphy and I don't intend to say anything to you that would add to the horror of the position in which you find yourselves. The sentence and judgement of the court are, and it is hereby ordered, that you Henry Cordner and you William J. Perry, John Terence Oliver, Patrick Simpson and you Joseph Cahill, and you Thomas J. Williams, that you, and all of you, be taken from the bar of the court in which you now stand to the prison from whence you now came, and that on Tuesday , the eighteenth of August, in the year of our Lord, one thousand, nine hundred and forty two, you be taken to the place of execution of the gaol in which you are confined, and then and there be hanged by the neck until you are dead and that your bodies be buried within the walls of the prison, within which the aforesaid judgement of death be executed upon you, and pray the Lord almighty have mercy on your souls".

DEATH KNELL RINGS 3 TIMES

SOL SOLICITOR Before leaving this court house on behalf of my clients, the 6 accused, who have all truthfully stated that there was no premeditation in the killing of Constable Murphy, I hereby put in an appeal immediately to have the death penalty commuted and replaced with a less severe sentence.

DEATH KNELL RINGS 3 TIMES: KEYS JINGLE AND 6 PRISONERS ENTER CELL.

SOLICITOR (In cell) I've good news for everybody (turns to TOM) except TOM. (pause) HARRY.....JOE.....JOHN ...PAT.....JIMMY (pause) you've been reprieved; you won't face execution. (pause) What can I tell you TOM except I'm so sorry, we explored every avenue.....I'm sorry. This is the statement they've issued today and dated 30th August 1942: His Grace the Governor of Northern Ireland has considered the cases of THOMAS JOSEPH WILLIAMS, WILLIAM J. PERRY, HENRY CORDNER, JOHN TERENCE OLIVER, JOSEPH CAHILL and PATRICK SIMPSON, previously lying under sentence of death in H.M. Prison Belfast and has decided; That in the case of THOMAS JOSEPH WILLIAMS, the law must take its own course; That in the case of W.J.PERRY, H.CORDNER, J.T. OLIVER, and J.CAHILL, sentence of death shall be commuted to one of

penal servitude for life; and that in the case of PATRICK SIMPSON sentence of death should be commuted to penal servitude of 15 years.

TOM Thanks for your thoughtfulness Mr MARRINAN we couldn't have asked for a better solicitor than yourself.....(then speaking to the others) Don't grieve for me, remember, from day one this is how I wanted it. I wanted to die and I'm happy that you five are going to live.

SOLICITOR LINGERS A WHILE DEATH KNELL RINGS 3 TIMES
HE SITS ON FRONT EDGE OF STAGE RESTS FOR A FEW SECONDS
THEN TAKING OFF THE WIG HE SAYS

SOLICITOR Under this wig – a mockery to the truth; under this cloak – if I remove them both, I remove the farce, or do I or can I? No I cannot – SHAKESPEAR would have known how to tell this tale plainly for all to know. Under this costume beats still a heart – a human heart, on these stooped shoulders sit a burden that no man should have to carry; to me it is as heavy as Christ's burden in the garden of Gethsemane. He wanted to save all mankind; I want only to save one man. He's done wrong and he must pay but in my opinion his time is sufficient enough for repayment.....his life is too much, too great a price. PATRICK MURPHY'S life was taken, stolen, and I could not prevent it; but I should prevent the life of TOM WILLIAMS from being taken and destroyed, needlessly, as MURPHY'S was! (looking up) God.....Help me!

THEN HE GATHERS HIMSELF BACK TO HIMSELF AND DECIDES TO WRITE TO THE HOME OFFICE IN AN EFFORT TO SAVE TOM'S LIFE. WHILE DICTATING THE LETTER AS EACH NAME IS SPOKEN THAT PRISONER WALKS OUT FROM THE CELL AND BRINGS HIMSELF TO ATTENTION IN FRONT OF AUDIENCE. WHEN LETTER IS FINISHED, TOM STEPS FORWARD AND DISMISSES THE OTHER 5 WHO THEN MARCH INTO THE CELL NEXT TO THE ONE THEYBEFORE RETURNING BACK INTO THE CONDEMNED CELL.

SOLICITOR (In his office) CECILIA, I want to hand deliver this letter personally when you finish typing it; address it to (pause) His Grace The Most Noble, The Duke of Abercorn, Home Office Belfast dated 28th August 1942.

WITH PENCIL AND PAGE HE WRITES AND READS TO SECRETARY

Your Grace, I would like to bring some facts to your notice which are not generally known about the six condemned youths.

JOHN OLIVER is aged twenty one. His father is dead and he is an only child. He was a Painter in constant employment up to the date of this tragedy on Easter Sunday the 5th April 1942. He never had any previous trouble with the Police. He was a Warden in the A.R.P. attached to Post 124 Springfield Road, Belfast. Full stop new paragraph.

JOSEPH CAHILL was aged twenty-one on Easter Sunday and is the eldest of a family of nine. His father is a Printer in Belfast and his son was engaged in this occupation for about two years after leaving St. Mary's Christian Brothers School. He joined the Belfast Civil Defence Organisation about six months prior to Easter Sunday. His record is clear of all serious offences. Full stop new paragraph.

HENRY CORDNER is aged nineteen. His father is dead and his mother resides at 35, Malcomson Street, Belfast. There are five in this family. It seems that after the death sentence had been passed on this youth the mother fainted and she is now completely distracted and thinks that her son has yet to be tried. This boy was in the employment of Messrs. Short & Harland, up to the time of this offence. He was a member of the A.R.P. Post 122 and contributed largely to his mother's support. His father fought with the British Forces in the last War and died from wounds received at the Dardanelles. His brother is a Private in the British Army stationed somewhere in Northern Ireland. Full stop and new paragraph.

THOMAS JOSEPH WILLIAMS was aged eighteen years on Easter Sunday. His father was a Corporal in the British Army in the last War and I am informed that he is now a Sergeant Major in the Eire Army. His brother is a Private in the Eire Air Force. His mother died thirteen years ago and he is living with his grandmother, Mrs. Mary Fay, aged 70. His two sisters are dead. He was a member of the A.R.P. post 123 and was in constant employment as a House Repairer up to Easter Sunday. His police record is clear. Full stop new paragraph.

PATRICK JOSEPH SIMPSON is aged eighteen. His father and mother are alive. He is the youngest of a family of three and was employed as a Sheet Metal Worker up to Easter Sunday. He was in the A.R.P. t 123. His father is a Group Warden and is employed in Hughes' Bakery Belfast. He has no

record. Full stop and new paragraph.

WILLIAM JAMES PERRY is aged twenty-one. His father and mother are alive, and there are three of a family. His father is employed in an Engineering Firm in London doing important war work. This boy had various jobs in Belfast and was engaged building Air Raid Shelters up to Easter Sunday. His record is clear. Full stop and new paragraph.

All the accused stated that they had no intention of shooting anyone and that they were very sorry that Constable Murphy was killed. It is obvious that these young men were dismayed and distressed when they heard that death had occurred.

Your Grace can see that the average age of the prisoners is a little over nineteen years. In all the circumstances I would ask Your Grace to give the greatest possible consideration to the many pleas lodged with you for mercy. Yours respectfully, Desmond P. Marrianan. (Slight pause) As quickly as you can, Cecilia, and please God, this will do some good.

DEATH KNELL RINGS 3 TIMES: KEYS RATTLE AND CELL DOOR SLAMS CLOSED

SOLICITOR (In cell with letter in hand) TOM, this was my last attempt earlier today to get your sentence commuted, but the Governor of Northern Ireland won't even see me, nevertheless I hand delivered the letter which reads: (opens letter and reads) You will pardon my further note. It has been reported to me that your attention should be directed to the fact that depositions proved that THOMAS J. WILLIAMS before the police actually entered the room upstairs where the six were, had ordered his comrades to lay down their arms, the result, in all humane probability being that the lives of the police who shortly afterwards entered the room, were saved. I am requesting that this saving fact should be borne in mind to the youth's credit.

DEATH KNELL (3 RINGS) TOM IS IN CELL WITH PRISON OFFICER WHO HAS BEEN ASSIGNED TO GUARD HIM PRE EXECUTION TOM IS SITTING ON BED AND OFFICER IS ON CHAIR.

TOM Right now eleven o'clock, one more hour and then another eight and I'll be gone.....so I suppose this will be the last time you'll have to put up with my singing (laughs) this is a special time and so I am going to sing a song I learned on my grandma Fays knee and it's ironic really just listen to

the words.....it was written for 3 brave men, ALLEN, LARKIN and O'BRIEN, all three hanged and known thereafter as the Manchester Martyrs. (sings God Save Ireland)

High upon the gallows tree swung the noble-hearted Three.

By the vengeful tyrant stricken in their bloom;

But they met him face to face, with the courage of their race,

And they went with souls undaunted to their doom.

Chorus

"God save Ireland!" said the heroes;

"God save Ireland!" said they all.

"Whether on the scaffold high

Or the battlefield we die,

O, what matter when for Erin dear we fall!"

Chorus repeated with other male voices joining in.

PRISONER OFFICER IS TAPPING HIS FEET AND SMILING

ALL PRISONERS JOIN IN "God save Ireland!" said the heroes;

"God save Ireland!" said they all.

"Whether on the scaffold high

Or the battle field we die,

O, what matter when for Erin dear we fall!"

P/O You've a few hours TOM, stretch your legs out there in the wing, I'll sit here and rest a while TOM, go on son; you haven't changed your mind about breakfast yet, TOM? You should take something! It'll take your mind of things.....you know eating will focus you beforehand!

TOM The last thing I want to touch my lips is the Sacred Host at communion when I receive the body and blood of my God during mass. (slight pause) I'd like you to keep this prayer book when I'm finished with it, you have been good to me and I appreciate that.

TOM WALKS OUT TO WING WITH PRAYER BOOK IN HAND AND PRAYS WITH IT, SUDDENLY HE LOOKS ACROSS THE WING TO CELL FACING WHERE HE SEES A VISION OF HIS MOTHER SITTING ON A CHAIR. HE ISN'T STARTLED AS THEY LOOK INTO ONE ANOTHER'S EYES BEFORE SPEAKING.

MOTHER My boy, my poor poor boy. I'm here to be with you. My brave boy..... Are you afraid son?

TOM (Shaking his head) What's there to be afraid off mother dear! (whispers) I knew you'd come. I needed you to be here. Will you stay with me mother, will you walk with me and hold my hand? (opens his hand and puts it towards her) I always felt you near me any time when I was afraid..... all the asthma attacks when I was small..... I was afraid then, I used to think that I would die and leave grandma FAY broken hearted; but Gods good, I survived, and our RICHARD.....what do you think of him mother dear? He was never sick, he was the opposite to me. (Smiling) I knew God would let you look after me, and now you're here.... and I can see you. You've no idea how much that means to me..... mother dear. You look as lovely as I always dreamed you were. I was only 3 when you.....you died.....but I can remember things..... like smells, fresh cut grass and hot sunny days and melting lollipops all over my pram, things like that remind me of you mother dear. I don't even know if the memories were real or not because.....because, I kept them all to myself; I never once spoke a word to anyone about them so no one could take them away and tell me they never happened. I'm glad I kept those memories for now I can share them with you, my dear mother.

MOTHER Yes, yes TOM, we'd go for walks in the Falls Park, you in the tan-sad and Richard.....he would walk along holding on to the side; I remember the grass in summer time freshly cut, that sweet smell of grass and the roses.....you were a happy baby TOM.....my baby; it was so hard when I knew I was leaving you all behind; that was my greatest pain that which I felt in my heart. My dear mother has done a good job and I thank God for that; and our CHARLIE and ALICE may they be blessed always for their kindness to you son.....and your father TOM, he did his best. It wasn't easy for him.

TOM I know dear mother, I know. I love him dearly. I've written to uncle CHARLIE and asked him to give father: RICHARD and grandma my sincerest love. I didn't write today to grandma because I was afraid of causing her more pain, it was so hard to see her this morning, she was broken-hearted. I pray to God that they will accept my fate and be proud of

me and live their lives well and not let my death bring bitterness or resentment to them. My whole life, mother dear, since my earliest teenage years has been spent in preparation for this coming dawn; I don't mean my death on the gallows, no, not that at all, but, my life as a sacrifice for the freedom of my beloved country.....Ireland. I am not the first and I won't be the last to die a death such as this..... because, when the flame is lit, it takes more than an ocean full of water to put it out. I can only be who I am, I can't pretend to give my allegiance to a country that came here and took our land and persecuted our people, in order that I should get a good job or the promise of one. I am Irish, I am a republican and I have done what had to be done in the name of freedom. Certainly, mother dear, I am sorry that a life was taken, but many lives were taken in the past and many more lives unlived because of the British theft and oppression of our country..... even DEV has turned on us; under pressure..... sure he told his boys in government to intervene on our behalf, even though in March GEORGE PLANT was executed in Portlaoise. De Valera pays lip service when it suits him.

MOTHER I know all that son and I know that your comrade, SEAN McCAUGHEY from Ardoyne who was arrested this very day one year ago, he lies clad only in a blanket in the most inhumane conditions in Portlaoise prison. He needs your prayers son..... and the O'CALLAGHAN family from Cavendish Street they need your prayers; they're heart-broken since Monday last at the abuse of their beloved GERARD'S body after the R.U.C. shot him dead.....and like yourself son he loved his daily mass and had no fear of death. (Whispers and smiles) You'll be with him soon.

TOM It's a very strange feeling I have mother dear; you have brought a feeling of calm to me, and soon, in a few hours, I shall be free. Free from everything that ever imprisoned me. I'll calmly walk to my death and I thank God that I didn't have long to wait for it, unlike MacSWINEY, D'ARCY and McNEELA, they died slow tortuous deaths on hunger-strike, at least I've been spared that. I'm surrounded by my comrades so I know I die not alone; I die only in body, my comrades will keep alive my spirit in their hearts and in their songs and in everything they do for Ireland. Not only am I surrounded by my comrades here but I feel the closeness of those who went before me.....as if they are here standing about me waiting for me to bring me

safely home..... to my God. And there is this other closeness mother dear that I feel, and it is to the girls in Armagh jail who also fought the good fight shoulder to shoulder with us all from our beloved 'C' company..... Belfast Brigade.

Death knell (rings 3 times)

MOTHER The priests have arrived son, it's almost time. Let us pray a simple prayer together and then know that I'll be beside you till the end.

TOM (Smiling) Grandma taught me how to join my hands to pray and told me to always keep them pointed upwards because even if I couldn't think of the right words to say that my feelings and longings would go straight up to God and he would receive them and that was as good as saying a prayer out loud.

BOTH (Joining hands together they pray) Oh my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended thee, who art so infinitely good and I fervently resolve by the help of thy holy grace never more to offend thee again.

TOM Oh Lord, help and protect my poor country and let my death serve as the last sacrifice to be offered for our freedom as a united people and a great nation. Amen. (Clenches his fist in the air) God save Ireland!

The Death Knell (ring 3 times as TOM turns and walks back into cell)

IN THE DISTANCE THE ROSARY IS HEARD FROM THE CROWDS IN THE STREET, SOME JEERING IN BACK (IF POSSIBLE) OF LOYALISTS DRUMS AND SHOUTING AND SINGING 'ROLL OUT THE BARREL A DRUMMER BOY WALKS IN FRONT OF TOM AS HE WALKS TO GALLOWS.

CELL DOOR OPENS TOM AND PRIEST WALK OUT, PRIEST IS READING FROM SMALL BIBLE, TOM WALKS HEAD ERECT, GLANCES ACROSS AS MOTHER IS WALKING PARALLEL TO HIM STEP BY STEP. THEY MOVE TO BACK OF HALL WHERE A WHITE SHEET HANGS AND BEHIND IT IS THE HANGING ROPE, TOM WALKS TO ROPE AND STANDS STILL WITH HIS HEAD HELD HIGH. DEATH KNELL (8 RINGS)

PRIEST (Fr ALEXIS turns to audience) "I met the bravest of the brave this morning. Tom Williams walked to that scaffold without a tremor in his body.

The only people who were shaking were us and the hangman. I've one other thing to say to you. Don't pray for TOM WILLIAMS, pray to him, for at this moment TOM is a saint in heaven".

LIGHTS OUT:

TOM V/O (With echo) Well dear Hugh I'll close with a message to Oglai na hEireann, "To carry on, no matter what the odds are against you, to carry on no matter what torments are inflicted on you. The road to freedom is paved with suffering, hardships and torture, carry on my gallant and brave comrades until that certain day.

END

I was invited by Eibhlín Glenholmes from Taranall who was directing and coordinating a project on republican women throughout the republican struggle to write a short piece for the project. I choose to write about two leading republican women from Cumman na mBan and the scene takes place on the Falls Road during the 1964 Divis Street riots.

The characters are: Mary McGuigan and BRIGID Hannon both lifelong members of Cumman na mBan. The scene opens with the sound of rioting in the background. Mary is standing with two odd shoes in her hands calling BRIGID who steps forward with one shoe in hand.

MARY (Waving two odd shoes in hands shouting) BRIGID.....BRIGID HANNON.....BRIGID over here.

BRIGID Oh my God.....MARY...MARY McGUIGAN.....didn't think I'd see you so soon all this way across the town.... MARY (shaking her head) where's this all goin to end. The peelers are beatin our men and young lads up Barrack Street.....but they're so brave they're beatin them back.....some only school boys MARY.....14 year olds if they're a day.....and from everywhere: Old Lodge, Markets, Short Strand, Beechmount, Ballymurphy and as far up as Andersonstown. MADGES house is like a field hospital.....bodies lyin across everywhere..... the first aiders are doing a great job.

MARY I know BRIGID sure I'm over lookin out for my own, I can't keep that FRANCIE one in; he's with his daddy so I hope he's all right.....please God.....JOHN'll help all the Ardoyne ones to get back home later when it's died down a bit.....hopefully it will die down for the night

soon.....but BRIGID look at that crowd..... what are we goin to do when this is over? There's no stoppin us now.....this is the start.

BRIGID Well MARY we'll just have to work harder at gettin things set up. You know all the people from over your way and how vulnerable Ardoyne and the Bone are.....when things begin to get bad they'll look to you MARY and other republicans to organise and defend both areas..... you know MARY.....I've a foreboding that it won't be too long a wait till bigger attacks start happenin now that the Unionists have a mouth piece like that man Paisley.....

MARY (Holding out both shoes) Look at these shoes BRIGID some poor mothers are probably still payin for them and who ever owns them won't be able to go to school in the mornin barefooted! What are we like BRIGID? 1964 and still we struggle for everything: for food....for the money to pay our rent.....to cloth our children.....to keep our families warm.....strugglin to make ends meet.....strugglin to get a decent house.....a job.....everything' a struggle. And we're strugglin to be accepted politically.....we're strugglin to cast off the oppression of this Orange state that tries to keep us down.....and soon BRIGID we'll struggle to survive another pogrom.....as bad as ever it was in the 20's.....but.....at this moment lookin down that road for whoever owns these shoes we can be certain that we'll fight back this time with a determination that won't allow us to stop until we win once and for all!

BRIGID MARY, when this settles down and the election is over we'll get a meetin with all the Belfast Cumman na mBan and begin to work out a new recruitment strategy; we need dedicated women and young girls now more than ever. The young girls will have to be brave and patient and to be trained on every weapon we hold; they will have to learn the ways of war.....unfortunately; for they will have to learn to give up much of their youth and maybe their freedom or even their lives.....Give me the shoes MARY, I'll leave them at the corner of Lesson Street and maybe whoever owns them might come along and find them there before tomorrow.

MARY Hopefully we might all find what we're lookin for....sooner rather than later BRIGID.

(THEY BOTH EMBRACE AND RIOTING IS HEARD IN BACKGROUND)
END

TWO EAST BELFAST MOTHERS THOUGHTS

(Their reflections on the past and contemplation on the future)

I got a phone call from Sam White (Charter NI) asking if I could write and stage a short drama the following day for the unveiling of the new murals in East Belfast. Cathy Woods and myself played the parts as there wasn't enough time to get an actress to play 1st Mother (did the best I could) Sam's project involved taking the paramilitary murals down and replacing them with community based murals. At the time this was a sensitive issue in some Loyalist areas of Belfast. I was happy that Sam trusted me enough to articulate where his community was coming from and where it was at that time in the process of moving on. (November 2013: Audio recording on <http://www.roseleenwalsh.com>)

Two mothers at a bus stop in East Belfast one standing and the other sitting:

1st Mother

Well Agnes, what do you think of all these new murals getting painted..... and..... over the ones we're use to now for all these years? Who's idea was all this? I like the auld ones, I don't fancy all this change, it's a bit hard to accept when you've been brought up with it all your life. I just can't hack change, I like things to stay as they are. You get used to it all I think, I mean I remember when I was a wee girl comin up to the twelfth every year our King Billy always got a new coat of paint, and the horse got a lick as well, and it always was expected. When you were a wee girl you knew the twelfth was near when you saw the boys out with the paint brushes and lookin back that was our culture being recalled and respected. And that's as it should have been. We used to go down to Sandy Row and then up to the Village and compare all the wall paintings..... I don't think the word mural had been invented back then.....but ours was always the best by a mile! I like our murals Agnes, why change things when you see nothin wrong with them, tell me Aggie love..... what do you think?

2nd MOTHER

My da lay in jail for years. He believed he was right. He wasn't on his own,

nearly every man in our district was involved in one way or another in what was called the defence of our area. There were different degrees of involvement.....not all just in the defence of where we lived.....but other things.....that's what my da was involved in.....the other things. We would go up every week to Long Kesh, my poor mother havin to drag us in the winter because we'd rather have stayed in bed where it was warm and cosy; Long Kesh was always a cold cold place; especially for kids who didn't know what all this was about. It wasn't just the lack of heat that made the place cold it was somethin deeper, somethin no child should be faced with.....ever, because those feelins last, they stay with you forever, unless you find a way of lettin them go so they can't destroy all the potential for creating good that's within you. That's why I tried to shield my boys, WILLIAM and GRAHAM . But you can't wrap them up in cotton wool forever.....try as you may; not when you live here. I love East Belfast; this is my home; I'm a proud East Belfast woman; a proud Loyalist and most of all I'm a proud East Belfast mother.

(LOOKS AROUND AT EVERYONE)

When my da got out of jail it became obvious what we as a family had lost, my two brothers needed our da in so many ways.....they needed the role model that a good father is to his sons.....and daughters.....but our da believed what he did was the right thing at that time and our mother stood by him. We had no say in adult matters, there was no choice for children. But we loved him and we believed what he believed.....but then when I had my twin boys I just didn't want them to go through all that that we had went through. I saw their potential and the gifts that God had given them and I wanted to make them into sons that any mother would be proud off in any company. I love my boys and I wanted a good life for them. Things didn't work well for them at school, but they had other qualities that needed nourished and protected otherwise those qualities would be lost forever and come to nothing. Although my boys were twins they were very different in their outlook on community and life in general. WILLIAM ended up in jail.....and when he got out he took to takin photographs of the wall murals, he loved them and aspired to be part of the message they sent out to the community; he even made posters and cards with the images; he really is creative in many ways.....

PAUSES.....BECOMES THOUGHTFUL..... CHANGES TONE

I hear a voice in my head sometimes saying To everything turn turn turn.....
there IS a season for every purpose under heaven.....a time for
war(pause and whispers) a time for peace.....

CHANGES TONE – EXCITED

A new time has arrived: A time to change the way we see things; if WILLIAM
had joined the boxing club like GRAHAM did..... then he may never
have been put in jail.....I think it's a safe bet to say that! Boxin saved my
GRAHAM and helped him into manhood. I'm proud his fightin is all done in
the ring!

There is a time for everything.....these new murals point us to the
future not to the past.....there was a time for the past and it will forever
remain in our hearts where all sacred things are kept.....now the future
looks bright it looks like it belongs to us all regardless of what we held as our
beliefs, we don't throw those beliefs to the side because a new day has
dawned on us and we should celebrate the fact that we are alive to look
forward instead of always looking backwards.....removing some
murals to replace them with new murals doesn't mean we forget.....we
remember and because sometimes we can't forget we know we have to
change the picture and move on and let them go to embrace the new
adventure that lies waiting for us as a community and a people with hope
and a newness of aspiration in our hearts. We have heroes in every field in
every age and decade..... my GRAHAM'S heroes are boxers
.....the late Billy Birch from this area knew the great work the
Eastside club did and he supported it until he died but the Ledley Hall was
the buildin block for the youth of this area in the early days, our young boys
were never deprived off the willingness of good men like those who coached
them in the boxin clubs; and just look at young Carl Frampton from North
Belfast, my boys cheered Carl on 3 weeks ago in the Odyssey and if he'd
lost the fight they still would have cheered because it was the gettin there
that counted; he was equally cheered on by West Belfast as well, we all
recognise greatness from whatever quarter it comes, but boxin breaks down
all barriers inside and outside of the ring. My own heroes are my two boys
who both work for a brighter tomorrow than my yesterdays
were.....I'll let you all in a little secret of my own, I'm going to be a

granny for the first time next month, and its twins, apparently a boy and a girl.....but the girls now can be boxers as well, just look at young Katie Taylor! Clapping from East Belfast doesn't sound any different that clappin from Dublin.....does it?

(looks up at audience)

I'm glad that I felt free to say to you all what I've just said, it shows a change in climate everywhere; maybe this coldness will go away and leave us all in peace in that warm place that is real community sharin and carin. Now, I'd like to say good-bye with a few quotes from the greatest boxer in the world:

This is a verbal good-bye..... but like the new murals it's somethin to ponder on for each new dawn; look at the murals and look to the future with great expectation! Remember, to survive we must move forward we cannot go back.....ever! Ask any mother and she'll tell you. (Clears throat)

MOHAMMAD ALI said: 'We can't be brave without fear' (pause) taking down the old murals was a brave thing to do and there was some fear in putting up new ones, like Ali said, fear and bravery, they march together as we head for that new shared future they're all talkin about; 'Don't count your days, make your days count'; we all know that but like every other wise thing we need to be reminded.....sometimes daily; and lastly, 'A roaster crows only when it sees the light. Put him in the dark and he'll never crow. I have seen the light and I'm crowing'.

Now..... let us all walk together in the LIGHT.

1st Mother

What about me Agnes.....can I come? You've convinced me..... I don't want to be left here isolated and alone and in the dark! I want my share of that new future you're talking about. Here, give me your hand, help me up!

END: LIGHTS OUT

I wrote 'Guard of Honour' to commemorate the centenary of Cumann na mBan. Some of the story line in the drama is based on true events. I wanted to say that the original Cumann na mBan from 1914 and the Cumann na mBan of the 60's 70's 80's and 90's were cut of the same cloth and woven by the same circumstances into the Army that it remained until they were disbanded.

GAURD OF HONOUR

Cast:

Nora Connolly O'Brien (Narrator)

Jean (New recruit)

Sally (New recruit)

Cath (Commanding Officer. OC)

Dusty (Intelligence Officer. IO)

Tilly (Volunteer in Active Service Unit)

Carmel (Dead Volunteers sister)

(I haven't tried to write in the Belfast dialect but I think the actors will know to drop the 'g' in most words ending with 'ing' for that is the way we speak in most parts of Belfast)

ON STAGE

An I.R.A. volunteer is being waked; Cumann Na mBan are in a room nearby waiting to swear in two new recruits and organise the guard of honour for the wake house. They are billeted in an upstairs bedroom two doors away from the wake-house and several unexpected incidents occur during the preparations for the new recruits The year is 1972 and Belfast is a dangerous place to be in.

A single bed decked in Manchester United posters and bed clothing, a small chest of drawers and cloths hung up on the inside of the bedroom door.

Notes for beginning.

ENTRANCE OF OLD GUARD FROM BACK OF HALL THROUGH
AUDIENCE

COMMANDING OFFICER CARRYING C.NA.MB FLAG WALKS UP
MIDDLE ISLE AS 'FOGGY DEW' IS PLAYING, WHEN SHE REACHES
HALF WAY UP ISLE THE VOLUNTEERS BEGIN TO MARCH BEHIND
HER. C.O. AWAITS VOLUNTEERS AND GIVES ORDERS AS FOLLOWS:

1. Quick march. Go Mear Máirseáil (Go Mar Marshall)
2. Right turn. Deas Iompaig(i) (Jas – Um Pig)
3. Halt. Stadaieí (Sta Deh Gee)
4. Mark time. Greadaigí fúibh (Grad-ah-gee-foo-ive)
5. Company Attention. Complachí (Com-Placht) Aire (Air-Reh)

AT THIS POINT NORA CONNOLLY O'BRIEN WALKS UP MIDDLE ISLE
AND O.C. SALUTES HER AND BRINGS HERSELF TO ATTENTION. THEY

BOTH WALK INSPECT COMPANY, NORA TOUCHES EACH TO STRAIGHTEN CAP OR UNIFORM. NORA THEN STEPS TO SIDE OF LINE OF VOLUNTEERS AS O.C. GIVES ORDERS TO MARCH BACK DOWN MIDDLE ISLE AND TO TURN RIGHT AT BOTTOM AND MARCH UP TO SIDE OF STAGE WHERE THEY WILL BE SEATED UNTILL END OF DRAMA.

O.C. Company by the right quick march. Complachí, Do Réir Dheis, Go Mear Máirseáil (Com-placht, Doh Rare Yes, Go Mar Marshall)

When they reach end of isle O.C. commands:

O.C. Right turn. Deas Iompaig(i) (Jas-Um-Pig)

END FORMATION AS FOLLOWS:

GUARD OF HONOUR

ACT ONE:

LIGHTS SLOWLY UP AS FOGGY DEW IS PLAYED (WITHOUT LYRICS) FROM BACK OF HALL 10 FEMALE CUMMAN NA MBAN (from 1916 period) MARCH TO FRONT OF STAGE LEAD BY ONE VOLUNTEER WHO STEPS FORWARD BRINGING THEM TO ATTENTION. THEY ALSO DO SOME OTHER DRILL THEN SHE BRINGS THEM TO AT EASE BEFORE GIVING THE ORDERS TO RIGHT TURN AND QUICK MARCH. THEY GATHER TO THE RIGHT OF STAGE, OFF STAGE, AND STAND IN FILE AT PODIUM. NORA CONNOLLY O'BRIAN STEPS FORWARD AND BEGINS NARRATION/MONOLOGUE.

NORA I suppose you're wondering who exactly I am, or, who I was. Well if I told you who my father was then you'd know immediately who I am. We lived not too far from here at one time and I have to tell you that we had very happy memories of Belfast. My father loved people.....the female of the species was always a major concern to him because he understood their vulnerability and their universal second class citizenship. Every country in the world treated their women badly.....then. In the home they were designated to the kitchen and the bedroom and I dare say in that order; that was their allotted space that was where they were deemed to belong and they were supposed to be grateful for it. I don't count myself in the usage of the word their, neither do I count my sister Ina nor my dearest mother, Lillie Reynolds, because, that was never the way we were treated by father in our

home..... all were equal, and rightly so. Anyway, I'll not keep you in suspense if you haven't already guessed who I am..... my father was JAMES CONNOLLY. It was he who said 'the worker is the slave of capitalist society, the female worker is the slave of that slave'; and he did everything in his power to change that to build an equality between the women and the men who share this earth together. Now that you know who I am or was, it's time I told you why.....why I'm here. As you all are aware this is the centenary year of Cumann na mBan and I want to talk about then and now here in Belfast. Also, the year 1972 was a particularly tragic year for loss of life here in Ireland. Cumann na mBan were a strong force and stood alongside their brothers of Oglagh na hEireann; in fact they came into their own after internment.....it would be January 1973 before the first woman was interned in this phase of the fight for independence; and yes for freedom, freedom always, and all that that freedom entails, for when we achieve that freedom it's then that the other fight begins.....but off course perhaps it will begin much sooner than the day the British officially leave our shores no longer as the masters of the slave but as the slave of the Truth! The scene which we are about to witness has always intrigued me, because, it's a scene I could have played a role in myself with my sister Ina and any of our comrades because.....life is life and people never really change; we are all sisters together, then as now.

CATH ENTERS ROOM, LOOKS AROUND ROOM AND GOES TO LARGE MIRROR AT BACK OF BED TO FIX HER HAIR, AS SHE LOOKS AT HER IMAGE SHE LIFTS HER HANDS AND STARES AT THEM AFTER A FEW SECONDS IT IS OBVIOUS THAT SHE IS THINKING DEEPLY AS SHE WIPES THEM ON HER COAT AND QUICKLY HUMS THE TUNE FOUR GREEN FIELDS THEN SITS IN FRONT OF STAND UP MIRROR.

DUSTY (Enters from behind smiling) Go on sing it out loud I love that song, you sang it well that night in the exservies.

CATH (Singing) 'Long time ago said the fine old woman, long time ago the proud old woman did say, I have four green fields (DUSTY joins in singing) each one was a jewel, but strangers came and tried to take them from me, but, I have fine strong sons, (speaks: and daughters) they fought to save my jewels they fought and they died and that was my grief said she'

INTERUPED BY THE BANGING OF BINLIDS OUTSIDE STOPS SINGING

MOOD CHANGES

CATH Didn't know DAVEY MARLEY supported Manchester I thought he'd be a Liverpool man. He's real good looking DUSTY isn't he?

DUSTY Not too bad.....gorgeous eyes, I prefer brown eyes and long blonde hair.....DAVEY'S too clean cut for me I like them modish.

CATH Oh you mean like SEANIE DEE (laughing)

DUSTY Oh God CATH I think he's gorgeous I'd love to go out with him but he's seeing (indicates with her thumb) her from round the corner.....it looks serious too.....!

CATH Well, why don't I do a bit of (stresses with her lips) I.O'en for you. (slight pause then in a whispered tone) At the army meeting last night the O.C. ask me to get someone to go into Lisburn tomorrow to get a few incendiary targets ready for next month... so, I could send you, because, SEANIE is B company's I.O. now..... it's him who you'll be with. (raises eye brow) Okay? How's that for getting fixed up.....(both laugh) We'll talk later.

DUSTY Right (mood becomes sombre) The O.C. will let us know when the body is on its way. I still can't believe Tony's gone. (sits on bed) He was good he knew his job inside out..... Wee SCALE said it was a faulty detonator they've taken the whole batch away to get examined.....(whispers) but what if someone made them faulty.....?

CATH That's loose talk and you should know better than to talk like that. When these two new recruits arrive just watch what you say let them know from the beginning what way we run things in B Company. I will not tolerate loose talk; from anyone! You should know that, talk like that creates dissention.....we're winning this fight and we all work together, just think what talk like that can do to morale!

DUSTY Then why did you tell me about the meeting last night.....or even that there was a meeting?

CATH Because I trusted you.....yes I know I shouldn't have said anything.....lesson learnt; (coldly) now the recruits

DUSTY How did we get their names? Who made the approach?

CATH They're two mates..... SALLY'S da is big MICK, so he passed the names on to the army and they passed them on to me. They're both 17; still at school, so maybe they can do a bit of training with you first..... and then we'll see what they're capable off.

DUSTY Well if they're both clean the double O* could be doing with some unknowns.....if they're game that is. It looks like we need plenty of girls for all these incendiary bombs, we can't keep up with PEDDLES.....he'd have them all over the place every day if we could supply the girls.....

CATH I've said before all we need is six girls and we could blow anywhere in the North to pieces. We have to be sure about their training..... I don't want a repeat of what happened to (mimes) P.....she could have died.....nitrobenzene poisoning is lethal. This is early days and we are still learning!

*double O means the operations officer thus OO

DUSTY Is she still away?

CATH Yeah she'll be away for donkey's.....they were going to amputate both hands but we got a specialist in from another country and he said there was no need and he was right.....and she was lucky.....really lucky, the other guy kept insisting she was going to get gangrene.....we'll never know for sure about him! (Stare at one another for few seconds)

DUSTY How did her family take it? I heard they didn't agree with her being involved and went ballistic when they were told what happened her. Can't blame them really, it's their daughter.....

CATH Yeah, it was awful, brigade had to break the news to them..... and her da.....he lifted his fist and ordered them out of his house and told them not to come back.

DUSTY So what happened then, how did they find out where she was and what was happening to her.....like she could have been dead! How did they know where to go to see her?

CATH I was sent round later that night and the aunt from the SDLP was there, God..... what I'd to take from her..... she was lucky I didn't start!

Anyway, the PP arrived in the middle of yer woman's rant with two of his apostles, you know yer man with the toupee.....ginger, I never take communion from him, anyway his toupee's like a cat sitting on his head and it just suits him (DUSTY nods her head in agreement) yeah him, well, (laughs) I was waiting on the Brits booting in the door and arresting the lot of us.....the house was packed with all the family and the others and me.....any way eventually the da and Fr what's his name came out to the hall to talk to me and to get away from the madness in the kitchen..... I explained the situation, that if he made a fuss that she would be arrested and charged with all those explosions two weeks ago.

DUSTY So who stayed with her in hospital?

CATH Oh there were plenty there to look after her and the family agreed to wait until we got her into a safe house for them to visit and I don't think they really understood how bad she was until they actually got to see her. So lessons learned. (Smiles)

DUSTY (Looking at her watch and referring to new recruits) They'll be here shortly. I told them to come five minutes apart and to use the back door.

FOOTSTEPS HEARD RUNNING UP STAIRS. DOOR OPENS AND C NA MB GIRL RUSHES IN.

TILLY It's here, the body's just arrived! (looking around) Where's the guard of honour?

CATH The Fianna are doing it until 9 o' clock tonight and then we'll take over until nine in the morning. I've the funeral sorted: Madge, Peggy, Brigid and Minnie from the 3rd batt. They've all their own leather jackets and black tights; the T.O. has the barrettes, skirts, jumpers and ties in a dump..... oh yeah and the gloves, brigade wants the gloves as part of the uniform from now on, it looks better... more military.....so that's that sorted. Right (to TILLY) go on round to number 33 and let them know the arrangement. Emphasise to keep a low profile and not to be drawing attention to the call house. I think its number 8 until after the funeral.

TILLY HANDS CATH A FEW LARGE PADDED ENVELOPES WAITS FOR APPROVAL, CATH ACKNOWLEDGES THEY ARE THE RIGHT SIZE THEN TILLY WALKS OVER TO THE BED AND SITS ON THE EDGE AND

COVERS HER FACE WITH HER HAND CATH AND DUSTY LOOK AT ONE ANOTHER REALISING SHE IS UPSET.

CONTINUES:

What's his mammy like TILLY?

TILLY BETTY'S bearin up, I think she's afraid to start crying now in case she can't stop.....but his sister CARMEL, she's giving everyone dirty looks, I was there last night when she came in, the uncle DAN picked her up from the airport and as soon as she walked in the door she started saying to BETTY things like, why did you let him get involve with these people, I warned you at Christmas to keep them away from our door.....I mean, she was really angry and poor BETTY just took it all.

CATH Death is nothing new but, being privy to the actual grief of others is.....for us! If this had been an ordinary death TILLY, you wouldn't have been there to witness any of the family's emotions, we all have been thrown into an unbelievable situation here and I'm fearful it's going to get worse! Can you take it TILLY? Can any of us?

TILLY I did Guard of Honour at STEVEN'S and what an insight. The way people came and broke down and talked openly as if we weren't there, it was awesome, I used that word to describe it to MARK afterwards and he said I shouldn't use that word to describe it but I think he was wrong it's the only word I can think of to describe something so powerful and intimate as what we were privy too. It really did inspire me to be me no matter what! None of the mourners were inhibited; their emotions just flew out of them.....

CATH See what you're saying, I got that too. I thought about it afterwards as well, it was like we are all connected in some mystical way, in a truth that we can't contain, we have to let it out and be what we are.....I'm only turned 18 years old and yet I've seen things and did things that no 18 year old should have ever done or seen.....I want to.....

DUSTY (Feet steps heard coming up stairs) That'll be JEAN!

TILLY RUSHES OVER AND OPENS DOOR. ENTER JEAN. TILLY REMAINS AT DOOR

JEAN (Looking at TILLY whispers) DUSTY told me to be here for.....(sees DUSTY) Oh there you are, I thought I was in the wrong house.....

DUSTY Right JEAN, SALLY knows this house, doesn't she?

JEAN (Nervously) Oh yeah she used to go with DAVEY they were almost engaged at one time and then she caught him on with yer woman (indicating with her thumb) from round the corner, you know her with the big (motions with hands).....chest!

CATH COUGHS OUT LOUD AND DUSTY PICKS UP ON THE HINT:

DUSTY (Puts her hands up) Wait a minute JEAN, too much information can cost someone's character (then whispers) and loose talk can cost lives! Start as we all mean to go on, no character assassination but don't confuse ridicule with intelligence reporting.....

CATH LIFTS HER RIGHT INDEX FINGER AND INDICATES FOR JEAN TO SIT ON BED

CATH For example, JEAN, if we need to know something or everything about a person and you're asked to give an I.O. report on the person then that would include everything you can find out about them including their private life, you would have to be thorough and unbiased, that means if it's a friend of yours it shouldn't matter you must report everything you know or find out about them. (Looking at DUSTY) Do you want to finish.....?

DUSTY (Pacing up and down) Yes sure.....The one thing we don't like is gossip.....if it's gossip you're reporting then report it as gossip.....if it's rumour then you report it as rumour and the one thing we won't tolerate here in 'B' Company is loose talk or lies; especially if it's about a member.....got it.....(looks for reaction) sound.....sound!

FOOTSTEPS HEARD COMING UP STAIRS: DOOR KNOCKS TILLY MOVES SLOWLY OPENS IT. SALLY (NEW RECRUIT) WALKS IN AND SITS BESIDE JEAN ON BED. CATH SPEAKS FIRST.

CATH You're SALLY? I know your face from somewhere.....Have you a sister ELAINE long black hair she used to go with TONY HENDERSON before.....before he died?

SALLY Yeah, that's our ELAINE, but she didn't go with TONY, no, she fancied him for ages but she never went with him. She used to wait to see him pushing his bike up the Glen Road and make an excuse to walk along with him. She took it really bad when TONY died, Palm Sunday '71. It was the next morning when we heard (faraway look) never forget it. My mammy came in from seven o'clock mass, she went to St Teresa's for the whole of Lent; we were all devastated.....she ran up the stairs and woke us crying "you'll never believe who that was that was shot in the camp last night, it was TONY" we all jumped up and started crying. I can't bear to think about it sometimes (deep sigh).

CATH (After a few seconds) Do I know you from school?

SALLY St Dominic's.....I remember you in first year you were moved up.....you were smarter than the rest of us..... you left school?the last time I saw you was in Milltown at TOM McCANN'S funeral, God it was big.....that was terrible what happened them.....I couldn't stop crying.....I was sent home that day I knew them all and.....I thought the world was going to end that's how it felt.....and that night 8 of us went down and we all stood outside Dr Beirne's surgery at the top of Dunville street and.....we didn't know what to say or do we just kinda stood there starrng across.....we tried to say a prayer but we just couldn't.....I think everything just hit us like.....this is real.....real and getting worse by the day.

CATH Was that why you put your name forward?

SALLY No..... away last August..... two days after internment..... I gave my name to ROSE.....

CATH ROSE..... ROSE who?

SALLY ROSE CURRY.....ROSE was to get back to me (looks sad deep sigh) and then.....ROSE was killed..... ROSE and my sister SHEILA were born on the same day.....they started work in the same place over on the Donegal Road..... a protestant fella there fell in love with ROSE, (sombre) so he told our SHEILA at the funeral, he said that she stood him up..... and now he knew why. Hope he's okay.....he ask her not to mention to anyone that he was at the funeral.....he'd get one

in the head from his own if they knew that.....our side wouldn't do that (looking for agreement).....sure they wouldn't.....?

CATH But why did you give your name to ROSE CURRY? ROSE was with the Officials.....do you still want to join them or what made you change your mind.....I mean we are very different organisations with different ideologies since the split!

SALLY I know all about the split now, but, at the time when I asked ROSE to put my name forward I didn't know anything about it at all. I've did plenty of researched since then.

CATH And what did you find out that convinced you that we're the right army to join?

SALLY I know that Cumann na mBan supported the anti treaty men in the 20's after the civil war and they walked out of the Dáil along with the I.R.A. and continued to be (SALLY AND JEAN LOOK AT ONE ANOTHER AND SAY TOGETHER) 'uncompromising rebels'that's what I am (smiling and flippant) an uncompromising rebel, and proud with it!

CATH (Coughs) Yes, but remember this, that was our history, which is so important in enabling us to understand the present, but the thing is, this is the present, and it's our reality (speaks convincingly) we're not looking back on it..... we're living it every day!

SALLY Yeah but we can sort the Brits out now, we've plenty of weapons..... haven't me.....I mean the I.R.A. has plenty of weapons.

CATH Very good SALLY but it's still early days yet, if the Brits don't leave of their own accord then bad as things are now, it will get an awful lot worse. In an army like ours you also have to obey orders and you don't go solo, you're part of a team that depends on each team member, so you've no time for individuality when you're active; we are an army and we work in unison with Óglaigh na hÉireann and we take orders at all times.

SALLY Does that mean that we have to do everything we're told, ordered I mean?

CATH It may sound like a contradiction..... but, you are or soon will be I hope, a volunteer and will never be ordered to do anything and I stress anything that you don't want to do; operationally that is; what would be the point!

DUSTY Right, (Looking at CATH) I'll be back in 5 minutes.? I'll bring TILLY with me.....okay?

CATH Sound! Oh and don't forget the street directory. (Then to the girls) Did either of you know Dorothy or Maura, the Maguire sisters.....?

DUSTY AND TILLY EXITS DOOR

SALLY We both knew Dorothy from the chippie down at the bottom of the rock. We all hung about there listening to the juke box. We'd a laugh there all last July.

JEAN It was so strange.....

CATH What do you mean.....strange?

JEAN I mean ROSE dying like that and then DOROTHY.....and her sister MAURA.....what happened them I mean.....all at the one time. Two summers ago we were all just kids being happy, loving Simon and Garfunkel and wanting to be like Twiggy or Cher.....we had just stopped crying about ROSE and exactly to the day exactly one month later, 23rd October they died.....shot dead through the back of a car window..... the whole atmosphere around Belfast (far away) especially the Falls.... everything came crashing down.....it was like we were in a fog and were trying to find our way to the other side of the road..... we can't, I mean, couldn't, that's it, couldn't, see the way ahead.....everything was foggy.....unclear uncertain, even getting up in the morning time seemed strange.....you just didn't know what the day would bring.....

SALLY TOUCHES JEAN'S SHOULDER IN AN INTIMATE GESTURE THEN MOOD CHANGES.

CATH Is that why you both want to join Cumann na mBan? ROSE and the Maguires?

SALLY No.....we were waiting for someone to get back to us and then when Bloody Sunday came.....I ask my daddy, Mick O'Neill you know him (nods her head) to put our names forward and now we're here ready and waiting.

CATH Right girls, (like an order) Any questions?

JEAN Do we get sworn in now?

CATH I have to give you some of the rules first and then you can ask questions, after that if you both still want to go ahead with the oath of allegiance then we'll proceed and you'll be sworn in and become members of 'B' Company Cumann na mBan. (CATH takes a document out of her coat pocket and hold it up to read)

SCENE IN BEDROOM FREEZES AND NORA CONNOLLY O'BRIEN STEPS ACROSS BED ROOM AND PROCEEDS TO TALK TO AUDIENCE.

NORA What she's about to tell them can't be all that different from what we told to others just down the Falls Road there a little. You know sometimes it does put girls and (laughs) boys and men off when they hear the line that they may either end up dead, maimed or imprisoned and that they may lose their friends and even family through their involvement with Irish Republicanism. It takes all your time, your freedom, which is ironic, because you are fighting for freedom; it can and it does take everything from you, but, it replaces it with something greater, something stronger and it takes you over and you go like a willing slave. ROSE CURRY accepted all the possibilities that her involvement with the republican movement might bring, she was a young girl of 18 summers and went willingly into that unknown sphere where bravery and fate lead the way to where fact and fiction become one! The more things change, the more..... they stay the same!

NORA LEAVES STAGE WALKS BACK TO PODIUM AND STAGE SCENE UNFREEZES

CATH Well, if you've any doubts say it now? (folds documents)

SALLY I don't think I would want to work with explosives they just frighten me.....will I have too if I'm ordered?

CATH No, I've already told you that and I'm glad you've brought it up again, let me explain. (Slowly) We are a volunteer army, but an army none the less and because we are a well disciplined army we find out at the beginning what our volunteers are capable of so we can build on their strengths, your strengths make us, as an army, stronger; and if you feel you don't want to work with explosives, you've stated that now and I'll take note because there would be no point in trying to force you to do anything you, in conscience, weren't happy with, it would be a disaster for the volunteers with you in a blowy up operation if you didn't want to do it. Right!

JEAN What happens if you kill someone by accident.....or it's a mistake? I mean how can we cope with that afterwards? That's what scares me more than going to jail or anything! I don't care about the Brits or Peelers they're an army and the enemy.....its ordinary people getting hurt that scares me! (Slight pause) Off course (Both girls look at one another) we've thought about this in the context of being in an army and the whole situation here, we've agreed it's not like our lives here in the 6 counties could be classed as normal or anythingbut.....that's how I see things.

SALLY (Looking anxious) And me!

CATH Look, both of you, you went to bed last night and slept well, am I right.....(both nod in agreement) on Sunday past, I saw you both at mass and Communion, right, (both nod in agreement) now, (slowly) you are beginning to understand the seriousness of this step, this commitment that you are about to swear an allegiance to and what the consequences could be to your beliefs or your understanding of your beliefs.....but ultimately to your peace of mind.....we want you to take all this seriously..... after all, as I've said, we are an army, we do what armies do. (CATH STEPS TO FRONT OF STAGE; CHANGES TONE) Amen or more appropriately Awomen!

BOTH GIRLS CLAP AND CHEER

JEAN Yes that's right , we both talked about this before, and we came to the conclusion that if the Brits or British Government hadn't invaded and plundered Ireland then all this wouldn't be happening, they expect us to be passive in the face of all this brutality inflicted by them on us as a people.....if we go back historically to the ten commandments the 5th 'thy

shall not kill' didn't just mean that you shouldn't kill dead another person, another child of God, historically it means also that no one has the right to: make another person feel so bad, or deprive them of employment, that they can't provide for their family or to make them feel by any account like second class citizens, because then they are in a sense already dead. They've been killed. Dead to what their life might have been; should have been. What they were born for has been murdered.....in a biblical sense.....yeah we thought that made sense (to SALLY) Didn't we? (SALLY acknowledges JEAN with a nod)

CATH Look girls, stop going into things too deeply, it won't do you any good at this moment and before I go on you'd better think about what you are getting yourselves into. I can wait for you to decide or we can go ahead now with swearing you in; but you both have to know and be sure that this is what you want to do. I won't think any less of you if you walk out that door and this will never be brought up again, ever.

JEAN (Standing up) I want to go ahead with being sworn in!

SALLY Me too. (hesitantly)

FOOTSTEPS HEARD COMING UP STAIRS: DUSTY ENTERS NODS FOR CATH TO COME OVER TO DOOR TO TALK IN PRIVATE SHE'S CARRYING A SHOPPING BAG CONTAINING UNIFORMS AND STREET DIRECTORY.

DUSTY Number 13 was raided early this morning so Mrs K burned the papers..... the Brits missed these uniforms, good job Mrs K had them hung separately in different rooms; we've no oath of allegiance now.....

CATH Did they get anything? Anyone billeting there.....

DUSTY No but that's the second raid in two weeks.

CATH Who got the house for us?

DUSTY It was me.....the family are all sound but the first raid we thought was a mistake.....we all thought it was the other Kelly's in the next street 'cause they're number 13 as well; they've been raided dozens of

times. Sure the daddy's up for the two shorts found under the bath and that was supposed to be a tip-off.

CATH Right.....(Speaks quickly and with an urgency) you can start an inquiry into this as soon as the funeral is over.....and you better report it to the army Batt I.O. as well. (Change of tone) So we've no oath of allegiance for the new recruits? You sit down and write a new one.....now! (Turns round to new recruits) Right girls, some drill first, and then we'll swear you in.

SALLY AND JEAN BEGIN TO GIGGLE: DUSTY THROWS BAG ON BED

JEAN I've two left feet.....

SALLY I've one left foot.....and one right one (giggling)

CATH (Sharply) Right! Shoulders back hands to your side head up eyes straight (still sharply) unless one's crooked. (all laugh) Glad you got that, you need a sense of humour in Cumann na mBan!

JEAN AND SALLY ARE BITING THEIR TONGUES TO STOP THEMSELVES FROM LAUGHING

CATH Right, you watch me and then I'll give the orders for you to follow.....this is how you stand (CATH stands straight and goes through the drill, shouts orders that are in italics) Whole body straight, hands behind back (she demonstrates each move) feet apart, got it, this position is at ease, right then, (they turn right) No I didn't mean for you to turn right, I just meant that that's O.K., O.K., attention, arms down sides and right foot hard on floor beside left foot, then left turn quick march...(she walks breath of room) mark time (marches on same spot) about turn quick march (marches to other side of room until she reaches wall..... about turn (turns) quick march (brings herself to attention when she reaches original place) Got it, now I'll call the orders and you both follow.

AS CATH IS ABOUT TO GIVE ORDERS FEET STEPS ARE HEARD RUSHING UPSTAIRS ENTERS TILLY CARRYING A SHOULDER BAG

CATH (To JEAN and SALLY) Sit down over there a moment (points to bed)

TILLY, (OUT OF BREATH) CATH AND DUSY WALK TO SIDE OF STAGE

TILLY The house I was to bring this stuff to was raided this morning. I only found out just there now and I've no time to run looking for somewhere else. Do you think (nodding head) they'd let me use here, it's an emergency, these have to be planted by four o'clock. (Silence) Colette's in the call house waiting, it won't take me long to assemble these, there's only 3 to go and they're ready; I've just to put the dets in.

DUSTY There's no one in downstairs, they're all up at the wake, they left as I came in and the old granny told me to make some tea if we want because they won't be back until late on.....

CATH Okay then just be careful.....

DUSTY What about the recruits? They haven't been sworn in yet...I haven't finished writing it! Can't let them see all this! What are we going to do?

CATH Can't send them away now, they've seen too much and there's a lot of activity around here – (DUSTY shakes her head in disapproval) Well what do you want me to do..... nut them! Just keep writing.....as fast as you can.

TILLY (Reaching down into holdall) Forgot to mention, (lifting gun out) I've a short here as well it's a 45 (rhymes off) magazine fed...recoil action maybe you should give them (nods in new recruits direction) a GL while it's here. Might be ages before they get another!

CATH (To DUSTY) How long are you going to be writing that?

DUSTY It's just not that simple believe me!

CATH (To recruits) Right girls, look, we'll swear you both in shortly, but, for now we're going to give you both a GL and an EL. Okay?

SALLY What's that?

CATH A GL is a gun lecture and an EL is an explosives lecture.....Okay!

JEAN Well.....ah.....well.....(nods head) sound.....
(nervously) if that's all right!

SALLY I think I'd rather be sworn in first.....if you don't mind?

CATH Ah I do mind SALLY, it could be ages before we can arrange another G.L. never mind an E.L.!

FEET STEPS HEARD RUNNING UP STAIRS EVERYONE LOOKS TO DOOR FEMALE VOICE CALLS CATH TO COME OUT TO LANDING.

V/O Cath Cath out here a minute.....

EVERYONE IS LOOKING AT EACH OTHER THEN CATH RE-ENTERS.

CATH Stay calm, girls the Brits have the house surrounded.

DUSTY RIPS UP THE PAGE SHE WAS WRITING ON AND HANDS A PIECE TO EVERYONE IN THE ROOM

DUSTY (With urgency) Right eat it (the new recruits look at one another) I said eat it.... NOW!

EVERYONE PUTS THE PIECE OF PAPER INTO THIER MOUTH AND CHEWS

CATH Right TILLY, give me the incendiaries and the short I'll put them on me so when they come in I'll take full responsibility for it all.

SALLY JUMPS UP AND TRIES TO RUN OUT DOOR, DUSTY GRABS HER AND PUSHES HER BACK DOWN ON BED BUT SHE AND TILLY FALL ON THEIR KNEES TO THE FLOOR AND START PRAYING THE ROSARY WITH THEIR PRAYER BEADS THEY HAD TAKEN FROM THEIR POCKETS. CATH THEN SEES A PRAYER MEETING IS A GOOD IDEA.
Continue:

And remember you are all here for a prayer meeting.

CATH REMAINS STANDING SHE TURNS HER BACK TO AUDIENCE TO PUT GEAR IN HER UNDERWEAR, EVERYONE FREEZES: ENTER NORA CONNOLLY

NORA (To audience) Being the O.C. on many occasions I would have done exactly the same thing. The O.C. must always take responsibility if it means saving others. It's like the Captain on a sinking ship or the pilot of an aircraft that's going down, you must make sure everyone below you in rank is first to be rescued! Now watch carefully what happens next and remember there is a lesson to be learned.

NORA STEPS TO THE SIDE AS FOOTSTEPS ARE HEARD RUNNING UP STAIRS STOPPING AND BANGING AT DOOR.

LIGHTS OUT

END OF ACT 1.

ACT 2

STILL BANGING AT DOOR: CATH GOES TO DOOR AND STANDS WITH HER BACK TO IT. A VOICE IN MUFFLED TONE IS HEARD THEN CATH OPENS DOOR AND WALKS OUT. THE GIRLS KNEELING ALL STOP PRAYING AND LOOK AT ONE ANOTHER. CATH THEN RE-ENTERS ROOM AND THROWS HERSELF ON TOP OF BED.

CATH Holy (mimics the word shit) I can't take this, my heart is racing it's going to burst! (Indicates for everyone to get up off floor)

GIRLS ALL GET UP OF FLOOR

DUSTY What.....what's happened? For God's sake what?

CATH False alarm, it was a pick up point.....Oh God I'm not up for all this (jumps up from bed) DUSTY, hurry up with that oath of allegiance that we've all just ate. Right TILLY get on with things quick as you can in case the Brits come back there's too much activity round here at the moment and I'm not comfortable with it one bit!

CATH REMOVES WEAPON AND INCIENDIARY'S FROM UNDERWEAR AND GIVES INCENDIARY'S TO TILLY, KEEPS GUN IN HER HAND POINTED UPWARDS. TILLY MOVES ACROSS TO STOOL AT MIRROR AND BEGINS TO FIT THE DETS INTO INCIENDIARY'S. CATH INDICATES FOR NEW RECRUITS TO COME OVER TO HER TO GIVE THEM G.I. DUSTY STARTS WRITING AGAIN VERY FAST; AT ONE POINT TILLY INTENSLY LOOKS IN MIRROR AT WHAT SHE IS ACTUALLY DOING WITH SHOCK ON HER FACE.

CATH (Stands in a firing position) This is a Browning .45 colt it's an American short gun that has been around a long time and we use it mainly for back up on snips or for robberies. It's handy and reliable. (Pulls the magazine out) it's semi automatic, houses 8, 9mm cartridges, it's empty at the moment but you'll see the bullet rounds another time and they're easily loaded into the mag. You push the magazine straight up (pushes it up the gun) When holding it always be careful not to point it at anyone unless you're going to threaten or shoot them, when handing it to someone always make sure it's never pointed at anyone and at all times when your handling it double check that the safety catch on. (points to safety catch) That's the

safety catch. If you're going to shoot you release the catch first then point the muzzle at the target and fire. Always hold the gun when you're shooting with outstretched arms like this with your other hand firm around your wrist that way you're more inclined to hit the target and it stops the gun hand from shaking and also if someone decides to tackle you they won't disarm you that easy and take control of the weapon. Oh yeah, the empty cartridge shoots out of there (pointing to top of barrel)

JEAN Can I try?

CATH (Handing her the gun) Right, now feet apart, just like this.....
(showing her as JEAN holds the gun in the flat of her hand she then points to several parts of gun) This is the barrel and the bullets come out here and this is the magazine base from where the magazine feeds the bullets or rounds we call them, this is the safety catch, only pull it back if you intend shooting and when you're not going to shoot always check that it's on, always. Hammer, rear sight, front sight, you'll be fine now stand the way I just showed you there and off course this is the trigger, don't ever touch it unless you intend to shoot. Got that?

JEAN (Stands in firing position pointing gun at SALLY and pulls trigger, SALLY jumps back in fear) That was easy peasy.....but what happens if you fire the 8 rounds and you need more?

SALLY STEPS BACK A BIT AND LOOKS AT JEAN WITH ANNOYANCE.

CATH Well, if you're going out on a job you might bring extra rounds but the thing is it's unlikely you'd get to use them, understand?

JEAN Think so.

CATH What about you SALLY your turn now.....

SALLY It sort of freaks me out a bit can I leave it to some other time?
Please.

CATH If you want but it's really an operation on its own to get a gun lecture these days. You should take it while you can; what's up SALLY is this not what you want? Is this not what you're here for?

SALLY Yeah it is, but it's all happening so fast, I didn't expect to be in a room with a weapon and explosives.....it's just hard to take in, I mean,

wanting to do something is one thing but, actually touching something that can and maybe has killed someone, and seeing a bomb being made up is sort of frightening I think! For me! I think I'm just frightened because I thought I was going to get arrested before I actually did anything, do you understand that?

CATH Sure SALLY, it's just nerves, you'll get over it, we all experience that at some stage. Look, when we get you to a few army lectures you'll feel more confident about things and also the political lectures they give all new recruits a better perspective about why we're in this and doing what we're doing and fighting a war and you'll learn about Brit propaganda and how it works. (CATH turns and stares at DUSTY)

SALLY Any lectures on how to be brave.....I feel frightened now just being here!

CATH Look, we are all frightened at times, all this (points around room) is goes against our nature.....all of us... but we focus on what's outside there (pointing finger at door)... and we try our best to articulate the reason that what we do is right. The women of 1916 they must have felt fear: the fear of hurting someone, the fear of being killed but the biggest fear is that we may be wrong.....(Long pause)

STOPS SPEAKING AND LOOKS AT HERSELF IN MIRROR AS THOUGH QUESTIONING WHO SHE IS:

CONTINUE:

but we're not wrong, neither were all the women in the past who fought for the freedom of our country.....we are here because they didn't finish the fight.....they didn't go out with toy pistols nor pretend explosives.....everyone who was killed in the past they are all really dead not just pretending to be dead.....we are in the serious business of trying to free our country of what has kept us in chains for centuries.....is it any wonder you are afraid. What I'm afraid of is that we might lose this fight and another generation will have to endure what we've already endured again and again. Don't be afraid.....we're all afraid.

TILLY HAS JUST FINISHED PUTTING THE DETS IN INCENDIARS SHE CALLS CATH OVER TO PUT THEM IN THEIR CLOTHING.

TILLY CATH, here a minute.

CATHY Right girls, just keep marking time, it will help you both concentrate.

TILLY I can't go out with these in the bag, if I run into the Brits they'll definitely stop me. I'll put them on and get going, the timers are set, COLETTE'S waiting round at the Parade; KATE'S doing scout. I'll plant two and COLETTE can take the other one; we'll split five minutes apart and straight to the targets.....O.K? There's no other operations in the town today so we can get straight in, out and then home. We can get changed and get our cloths washed right away. See you all later.....

CATH Sound! See you both in the Briar later.....the Freeman are playing.....ok see you both then.

TILLY EXITS AND AS SHE DESCEND STAIRS THERE IS A LOUD VOICE SHOUTING AND THE DOOR PUSHES OPEN. ENTERS CARMEL, DEAD VOLUNTEER'S SISTER.

CARMEL There you all are (looking at CATHY) I'm telling you now don't come near our house, it's all your faults that my brother is lying dead in that coffin two doors down (everyone stops and just stares in amazement) Do you hear me, don't come near us!

CARMEL CLOSES HER EYES AND BEGINS TO SOB CATHY RUSHES OVER TO COMFORT HER AND THEY SIT ON THE BED CARMEL PUSHES CATHY'S ARM AWAY

CATHY CARMEL, (speaks softly) I don't know what to say to make a difference to the way you're feeling but your TONY knew what he was about; he's, I mean..... he wasn't stupid..... he went into this with his eyes wide open.....like us all we know the score if anything goes wrong (rubbing her back) I know how you're feeling.....honestly, when my uncle JOHN was killed part of the family felt the same way as you, and now they don't talk to my mammy and it's awful, it wasn't her fault he died he knew what he was doing.....just like TONY.....your TONY.

CARMEL I warned him I told him at Christmas when I was over not to get involved in any of this, he was only a kid.....18 that's all our TONY

is....was.... ..18 just a kid.....he should never have got involved with all this.....(turns round and looks at SALLY) I'm surprised at you SALLY O NEILL.....you're going to break your mother's heart.....does she even know that you're involved in all this how can you do this to your family, is it not bad enough with your da being involved?

GOES OVER TO SALLY AND CONTINUES SHOUTING INTO HER FACE Things are bad enough without all this.....deaths and internment you're either going to die or go to jail.....and how many times is your house going to be raided and wrecked.....nothing you touch after they've been all over your home is ever the same, they bring their own badness into our homes and.....(sobs) it's your family who are left to pick up the pieces.....

AT THIS POINT CARMEL LIFTS HER HAND TO HIT SALLY ACROSS THE FACE AND STAGE FREEZES AS NORA STEPS BACK INTO ROOM AND ADDRESSES AUDIENCE

NORA When I was young this scene could have been played out in anywhere in Ireland. Everyone wanted a free Ireland but some left the fighting for others to do while they sat at home criticising and hoping always hoping that in terms of losing someone they loved that they would never have to pay that price. It's too high a price some said and once I was asked if the price of our freedom was worth one single life being lost and I replied that my father meant everything to me and to my mother and brother and sister.....but that if he accepted his fate then so to should we..... though that is never easy but easy enough for King George v and James Craig as well as the Dubliner Sir Edward Carson..... lost lives are the carnage of war.....power, greed, occupation, injustice, oppression and segregation are the main causes of war, when we fight to kill those things do we really believe that we can kill war, forever.....I believe we do believe that, but human nature is what it is and man always seems to want to fight and to dominate.....Ireland's fight has been ongoing for 800 years and with the cultural slavery of England's bloody feet and the undefeated spirit of our Celtic blood it could last another 800 years.....but in my life time and in this room I still see that undefeatable energy of the young that cannot be erased by force or by bribery!

VOICE IS HEARD CALLING CARMEL FROM BOTTOM OF STAIRS

V/O CARMEL, come back up to the house you're upsetting mother worse than she was already upset. Come on NOW!

STAGE UNFREEZES AND CARMEL REALISES THAT SHE WAS ABOUT TO HIT SALLY IN AN ACT OF VIOLENCE, SHE STOPS AND STARES AT HER HANDS AND RUNS OFF STOPPING JUST BEFORE SHE EXITS TO LOOK AGAIN AT HER HANDS AND AT SALLY.

CATHY (Looking at JEAN AND SALLY) Well girls how do you both feel now? You've experienced every kind of storm possible in this room in such a short time I hope it hasn't put you off joining (pause) but if you've any doubts at all say it now or really that's that! (Looking at DUSTY who indicates that she's finished the oath of allegiance) We're ready now what about you.....are you ready?

BOTH GIRLS MAKE EYE CONTACT: CATHY SUGGESTS THEY ARE LEFT ALONE TO DECIDE.

CATHY O.K. girls, we'll go to the wake now and see what the score is with the guard of honour.

TAKES TWO UNIFORMS FROM BAG THEN BOTH EXIT:

JEAN You go first, say what you think about all this now.....you're more clearheaded than I am, SALLY.

SALLY I know that JEAN, I'm always being told that I'm a good listener and I suppose that true.....ROSE told me that one night when she was getting her hair washed in our house. She brought a shilling round for the gas, her MARY was going out to the pictures with her fella and the geyser broke while MARY was washing her hair so ROSE flew round to our house and I washed her hair and towel dried it for her, I tried to get her to put it in a side shade for a change but she preferred it in the middle she'd beautiful long hair and her brown eyes.....

JEAN What was that song ROSE always sang remember about the Fianna?
THEY BOTH GET UP AND LOOK IN LONG MIRROR AS VOICE OVER SINGS

V/O By yonder green hill flies the flag of na mFainna, in silence the scouts seem to go to and fro, night shades are creeping soon they'll all be sleeping,

in the tents nearby where the camp fires aglow. Scouts of na mFianna advance o'er the nation, may every home greet you with joy and delight, may God give you strength for to love him and Ireland, and when the day comes gives courage to fight.

WHEN SONG ENDS THEY BOTH SIT DOWN ON BED.

SALLY Anyway, our SHEILA wasn't home from work and ROSE and I sat and talked and she said before she left that I was a good listener.....then I remembered all that when she died. She was happy, always happy and sure of her place in life.....she knew what she was doing and what the consequences could be (looks into JEANS eyes) I want that self confidence.....that ROSE had; I want to be sure that I'm doing the right thing with my life because like ROSE.....it could end anytime and (slowly) I'm not all that brave. Not like ROSE and DOROTHY and MAURA and all the rest!

JEAN You can't know that for sure, ROSE probably didn't see herself as brave at all, things just happened so fast and the same with everyone else.....well, I'm still afraid..... but I want to join and.....I definitely don't want to work with explosives either..... I'll talk it over with the girls when they return and make sure that I'll never be made work with them.....but I'm certain SALLY I do want to join and fight for our freedom it's this thing in me that keeps telling me that I should do something now to help rid our country from the Brits. Up until yesterday you felt the same didn't you? We didn't expect all this confusion when we arrived here did we? (laughs)

SALLY I believe in an united Ireland I know that's the only way forward for all our people but even now 1972 after all what's happened here I still am afraid.....afraid that if I kill someone that I'll lose everything I have.....I'm afraid to die I don't want to die not like this..... don't know if this is right for me JEAN.

JEAN I know how you feel SALLY, I don't want to die either and I don't want to kill innocent people..... but the Brits didn't have a conscience when they shot MAURA and DOROTHY in the back of their heads and they lied about it as well.....in 1916 the rising was started by PEARSE and CONNOLLY and the others but it wasn't caused by them, it was caused by

the Brits the English.....JAMES CONNOLLY wasn't for violence he was a man of the people and he had already tried to bring about change in so many ways before the GPO, and yet, he took up the gun and he used it. SALLY, we didn't burn down Bombay Street and it's no use being parochial in our outlook either, because, soon our world is going to get bigger and bigger, Ireland is definitely going to join the E.U. next year and so is Britain and there seems little we can do about it, if we want to do anything about it at all, that is!

SALLY You know all these things JEAN, you're really politically tuned in.

JEAN So are you SALLY, you have black pen pals from South Africa and when you gave that talk in school about apartheid, most of us had never heard the word apartheid until you explained it so you do know a lot or at least a lot more than some of us about the injustice of segregation in the wider world and here as well and what it leads to. Anyway, I'm not going to tell you what your conscience should tell you, I've to make up my own mind about that for myself and I know what I want..... for sure!

JEAN PICKS UP UNIFORM AND PUTS IT ON; SHE INDICATES FOR SALLY TO TRY THE OTHER SKIRT ON AS WELL. THEN DOOR OPENS CATHY AND DUSTY WALK IN BOTH IN UNIFORM:

CATHY Well girls are you ready. We've only one copy of the oath so you can do it together or one at a time.

JEAN I'd like to do it alone separately. It's a big step and something symbolically I need to do alone. It's about choices!

CATHY Fine then

THEY WALK OUT TO CENTRE STAGE NORA CONNOLLY WALKS ACROSS AND LISTENS.

DUSTY HANDS THE PAGE WITH THE OATH TO JEAN

DUSTY Raise your right hand and say your name at the appropriate time.

Sorry JEAN, this isn't the proper oath, but, it will do and I think it covers what we in Cumann na mBan are about.

JEAN (Clears her throat and reads from page) I JEAN JESS, pledge myself to support and defend to the best of my ability, the cause of a 32 county Irish Republic and to uphold the aims and objectives of Cumann na mBan and

the Irish Republican Army. I promise to keep secret any information concerning the military structures, arms or explosives dumps, member's identities or operations carried out by Cumann na mBan or our brothers in Oglagh na hEireann from the enemies of our country. I also promise that I will do my best to uphold the principles that our beloved patriot dead fought and died for and that I will be ever conscious to never do or say anything that may discredit the republican cause.....(turns and looks at CATHY) Oh my God am I a member of Cumann na mBan now! Wow
BOTH CATHY AND DUST SHAKE HANDS WITH JEAN AND THEN THEY ALL LOOK AT SALLY. NORA IS SMILING.

CATHY Now you SALLY?

THEY ALL STARE AT SALLY FOR A MOMENT

JEAN Don't be afraid SALLY, but don't do this if you're not ready.

SALLY STANDS UP HESITANTLY AND APPEARS TO MOVE TOWARDS THE EXIT THEN STALLS FOR A MOMENT.

SALLY (Looking at each girl before saying) I'm ready! I want to join!

JEAN HANDS HER THE PLEDGE WHICH SHE READS LOUDLY STOPPING AT TIMES.

SALLY I SALLY O NEILL, pledge myself to support and defend to the best of my ability, the cause of a 32 county Irish Republic and to uphold the aims and objectives of Cumann na mBan and the Irish Republican Army. I promise to keep secret any information concerning the military structures, arms or explosives dumps, member's identities or operations carried out by Cumann na mBan or our brothers in Oglagh na hEireann from the enemies of our country. I also promise that I will do my best to uphold the principles that our beloved patriot dead fought and died for and that I will be ever conscious to never do or say anything that may discredit the republican cause.

THEY SHAKE HANDS: SALLY PUTS ON UNIFORM: AS NORA STEPS FORWARD TO SPEAK TO THE AUDIENCE TILLY ENTERS AND THE OTHERS WELCOME HER WITH OPEN ARMS.

NORA Well, that's not quite how I remember it but still there is something beautiful in a young girl pledging her life to her country. I remember it all so

well and I would not have changed one single second in all that came to pass. What's past is past; we can't relive any of it but we hope we have made a difference somehow, somewhere and to someone. Never let anyone try to make you feel ashamed of who you are or what you did for the cause of Irish Freedom, be proud; I am a proud, we are a proud people. Sadly after this scene many more girls died and many others went to prison, here, down south and in England.

AT THIS POINT THE OLD GUARD OF HONOUR IS CALLED FROM BACK OF HALL TO ATTENTION AND MARCH TO FRONT OF STAGE WHERE THEY WAIT FOR ACTORS TO MARCH OFF STAGE AND PARADE ALONG WITH THEM.

Continue:

There is a heavy price to be paid for being a republican and Cumann na mBan paid that price in time: energy and lives; the name Cumann na mBan translate into English means. The Society of Ladies; Ladies rather than women was the correct word at the time of its inception in 1914! Here are only some of the names that are inscribed on memorials throughout the island of Ireland since 1969.

V/O ROSE CURRY, MAURA MEEHAN, DOROTHY MAGUIRE, PATRICIA McKAY, EILEEN MACKIN, ETHEL LYNCH, ANNE PARKER, ANNE MARIE PETTICREW, BRIDIE DOLAN, LAURA CRAWFORD, ROSEMARY BLEAKLEY, VIVIEN FITZSIMMONS, PAULINE KANE, JULIE DOUGAN, MARGARET McARDLE, MARIE WRIGHT, MAIREAD FARRELL, PATRICIA BLACK, MAURA DRUMM, SHEENA CAMPBELL, KATHLEEN THOMPSON (slight pause) you all know the names of those who are inscribed on your hearts and none of those names can ever be erased. The names of young women, (points back into room) like those we've just observed will be inscribed in the heart of Ireland and recognised by only those who have eyes to see.....!

CATHY MOVES TO FRONT CENTRE OF STAGE. SHE CALLS EVERYONE TO ATTENTION AND THEY ALL MARCH OUT OFF STAGE DOWN THROUGH AUDIENCE AS FOGGY DEW IS PLAYED. NORA REMAINS ON STAGE.

END: LIGHTS OUT

THE VIGIL

The Vigil is a play about the last hour in the life of Kieran Doherty who died on hunger strike in 1981 in the H Blocks of Long Kesh and also about Terence MacSwiney the Lord Mayor of Cork who died on hunger strike in Brixton Prison 1920. Both men were T.D's (members of the Irish Government) at the time of their deaths.

THE VIGIL

Cast

Kieran Doherty (Spirit)

Kieran Doherty (in bed)

Terence MacSwiney

Annie MacSwiney (Terence's sister)

Alfie Doherty (Kieran's father)

Margaret Doherty (Kieran's mother)

Michael Doherty (Kieran's brother)

IN THE DARKNESS AS THE DRAMA IS ABOUT TO BEGIN THE VOICES OF BOTH

TERENCE V/O "The circumstances of the vacancy in the office of Lord Mayor governed inevitably the filling of it. And I come here more as a soldier, stepping into the breach, than an administrator to fill the first post in the municipality....We see in the manner in which our late Lord Mayor was murdered an attempt to terrify us all. Our first duty is to answer that threat by showing ourselves unterrified, cool and inflexible.....I wish to point out again the secret of our strength and the assurance of our final victory. This contest on our side is not one of rivalry or vengeance, but of endurance. It is not those who can inflict the most, but those who can suffer the most..... who will conquer.....We must be prepared for casualties in the battle for Irish Independence. Let every man offer his life"

KIERAN V/O "Mum don't worry. It's just a step to the other side. A straight walk forward.....Mum sit by me and talk to me, you are always running away, tell me about everyone, do not waste time, do not waste a minute, let me enjoy these last days with you.....I think I'm going to beat TERENCE MACSWINEY (74 days).....Bring in your cup of tea mum and I will have a cup of happy with you...It will not be long until there are two more

empty beds". (Kevin Lynch)

LIGHTS SLOWLY UP

V/O They lit a fire within our land, that long was ashes cold, with splendid dreams they made it grow, threw in their hearts of gold. They saw thy slowly paling cheek and knew thy failing breath, they bade thee live once more, Kathleen, that were so nigh to death. And who dare quench the sacred fire? And who dare give them blame? Since he who draws too near the glow shall break into a flame. They lit a beacon in their land built of the Souls of men, to make thee warm once more Kathleen, to bid thee live again. (by Dora Sigerson Shorter 1866-1918)

LIGHT SLOWLY EXPANDS ACROSS BED

MARGARET (Praying) Oh angel of God his guardian dear to whom Gods' love commits him here ever this day be at his side to light to guard to rule to guide. (Looking across at ALFIE) How long ALFIE, how much longer will he suffer this?

ALFIE He's almost there MARGARET, almost.....like he told you yesterday "just a step to the other side, a straight walk forward" it's coming to that time now when we should all get ready to say that last good-bye.....(at that moment KIERAN lets out a loud sigh; they look at one another and both hold his joined hands and close their eyes)

MARGARET I don't know if I will be able to stay.....to let go.....to the end.

A YOUNG SLENDER MAN WALKS OVER (FROM BEHIND) TO THE ROCK AND LOOKS AT THE INSCRIPTION)

TERENCE We hunger strikers tend to do things back to front at times (smiling reaches out his hand to shake KIERAN'S) I'm TERENCE MacSWINEY .

KIERAN TERENCE MacSWINEY.....the Lord Mayor of Cork? Where am I? (Looking across at bed) Is that me? Mum and dad..... (goes to walk over to bed TERENCE pulls his hand back)

TERENCE You mustn't go there, we stand at a distance to watch and wait.....to pray.....to do vigil!

KIERAN But my mother I have to help her.....

TERENCE You may watch only! When it's time to go.....you go.

KIERAN But I need to (looking at bedside) help them how can I help them?
They need me.....

TERENCE They have you KIERAN.....go bravely like the man you are when its time. The boy they knew is gone taken from them already..... unbowed beaten but never broken.....isn't that right? They can never break the unbreakable.....the spirit that's in every Irish man (looking at sister) and woman who fight the good fight and who never give up to the enemy

KIERAN You speak fine words, that's for sure TERENCE. I've read a lot about you and I admired your courage in fact I thought that I might even out live you by at least a day.....A Lord Mayor into the bargain, that must have been.....interesting at least and good fun?

TERENCE Ah, hard times it was KIERAN, little or no fun at all but I got to follow in the shoes of a great man.....THOMÁS MacCURTAIN my friend and comrade. Murdered he was in front of his wife Eibhlís and his young son.....in his Cork home (thinking) revenge is not sweet, but it happens and some men call it natural justice! The R.I.C. man who plotted his murder was himself gunned down in your neck of the woods on the orders of MICK himself, the Big Fellow and the irony and such an irony it was, THOMÁS' own revolver they used to do the deed; coming out of church in Lisburn.....county Antrim; August 22nd (pause) and who would have guessed that MICK himself would have lay dead back in Cork on that exact date two years and a bloody war later. The British have so much to answer for not just here but all over the world..... You would agree with that KIERAN would you not?

KIERAN Sure I wad (would) I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the Brits! I wouldn't be lying there all six stone of me about to die.....about to break my family's hearts permanently and not be around to mend them.....ever. Will I last the night and go on the 74th day like you TERENCE.

TERENCE No comrade, it's an afternoon call for you.....so there you are you haven't out lived me at all (points across the way towards the audience) do you see across there KIERAN that's where your neighbours

stand daily and pray the rosary for you, well before they finish saying it today your father will arrive, his car will stop at your house further along there and he'll get out, walk back to the small crowd and tell them quietly that you've gone. It's the news they have been dreading but know its inevitability.....you played hurl and football with most of their sons and they will grieve for you KIERAN and wish this was all a bad dream. Dream. Ireland's nightmare. Still England's shame.

KIERAN Were you afraid..... TERENCE?

TERENCE No, never..... where you KIERAN..... ever?

KIERAN Not here no not on hunger strike.....but I was afraid once just the once!

THEY BOTH STARE AT EACH OTHER, THEN KIERAN LOOKS AT HIS PARENTS WHILE TERENCE LOOKS AT HIS SISTER

TERENCE I told ANNIE what I wanted, I told her to make sure that I would be remembered not as the Lord Mayor of Cork, but as the soldier. I fought as a soldier and died as a soldier dies, in the fight for what he believes to be right. How can a man die for a cause he doesn't believe is right.....if he doesn't believe then his death is a double tragedy because then he dies in vain but if he believes and he dies that same death on that same night..... his death becomes a victory.....and that is what he leaves to others..... his victory over an enemy who is so blind and who doesn't even know what or who exactly they are fighting. They can't know, how can they when after 800 years they are still trying to own... bully....buy..... I decided the term of my imprisonment should not be long and that I would be free alive or dead, within a short time. And so it was; 74 days as it turned out to be. I didn't want to die but given the circumstances I knew that my death could do more for Ireland..... for the cause of her freedom..... if I were to die that terrible death on hunger strike! And so that's how it was for me, KIERAN.....I decided to fight on passively with my only weapon, my will; they just didn't get it.....(looking at KIERAN) did they.....? Neither then nor now! I had hope but my hope was in vain, DAVID LLOYD GEORGE didn't give a toss about Ireland's plight and he a Welsh man too, even the King of England at the time, GEORGE the fifth wanted me to live and he knew how strongly I opposed

his chains on our country but they wouldn't listen even to him, such was their hatred and snobbery towards the Irish people.....(pause) and you.....almost ready to leave.....you'll see them all who have waited unseen by your bedside: BOBBY, FRANCIS, RAYMOND, PATSY, JOE.....MARTIN, KEVIN.....big TOM is almost ready and MICKEY.....shortly.....Now, what about you KIERAN, tell me about yourself, you've read about me and yet I know so little about you and your life.....I know only that you are to die as I died but tell me how you lived?

KIERAN (Smiling) There's six of us, two girls ROÍSIN and MAÍREAD and four boys, MICHAEL, me TERENCE and BRENDAN, and mum and dad over there.....auntie KATHLEEN and grandpops.....they live round a few streets away and we are all so close.....

TERENCE And a sweetheart.....you must have had plenty?

KIERAN Only one.....I loved only once and I can't talk about her... she will remain sacred in my heart forever and I've ask God Almighty to allow me to watch over her till her dying day.

TERENCE You probably understand this now KIERAN, that before you die you feel the grief and pain of those around you, your family and all who love you and whose lives you may have influenced but tell me this, tell me if this was true for you as it was for me?... When I was in the fortieth or so day of my hunger strike all earthly thing left me including my feelings and emotions.....and.....a new life took over.....I didn't feel that I belonged any longer to the confinement of my body.....I looked on my body so strangely.....as if it had been a shopping bag (they both laugh) or maybe an Aladin's lamp (both laugh again) I was free.....let out of the bag.....and I began to see things in a new light.....a light that surrounded and protected and became a vehicle to carry me everywhere, I saw things from a new and different angle.....even my flesh didn't feel the same... I was removed from it and became part of something so great and wonderful.....I knew every thought of MURIEL and ANN and that made me sad because I understood that they could never comprehend this freedom I was experiencing for it is not common and is peculiar to those who die of starvation. I saw it as a gift: a prelude to what

was to come.....(staring for a moment at each other) What about you
KIERAN.....what about you.....has it been the same for you?

KIERAN Yes, that sounds about right.....I didn't feel well; who could feel well after so long without food, but, you know what I mean, I was at that stage when all desire for food had long gone, and I was taking each day as it unravelled itself (looks across to bed) in that cell.....I'd entered into my 44th day and had fallen into a deep sleep when I thought I heard JOE call out gently.....(says softly) KIERAN KIERAN..... I opened my eyes or at least I thought I did and there was JOE standing at the foot of the bed and he was smiling and I wondered how he could stand there because I knew at that stage he'd lost the strength of his legs and was in the wheel chair.....(pause) and that sparkle in his eyes his dark beautiful eyes had returned and shone extra bright and he didn't say another word he just stood there smiling and the joy I experienced was really..... out.. of this... world..... there was something (smiles) just beyond anything I had ever known or experienced in my whole life and suddenly a bright light absorbed JOE and he was gone.....and I remember blinking my eyes to focus and..... standing there in front of me was a screw in his dark uniform and I thought I had died and went to hell.....When I heard that JOE had died eventually.....I was grieved but he was free and I knew it would soon be my turn..... somehow it all seemed easier as though JOE and the others.....but especially JOE was waiting to lead me home.....and now it's you who are here.....is that what you're here to do? Lead me home?

TERENCE (SHAKES HIS HEAD) Not I alone KIERAN.....I am part of your past part of your here and now; the unbroken chain. We are all here with you, all of Irelands past who have drank from the chalice of hunger; I stand to represent them all and to bring comfort to you this last day..... (whispered tone) tomorrow.....TOM and then MICHAEL.

KIERAN Will I be standing.....waiting..... with you tomorrow?

TERENCE That's not for me to decide, KIERAN.

KIERAN Who was there.....(nods his head towards bed) with you in the cell when you died..... TERENCE?

TERENCE My brother SEAN and my dear friend Father DOMINIC. I was gone before they knew.....as DOMINIC whispered prayers into my ear I watched from above and I wanted so much to comfort SEAN but.....I could only feel joy such joy.....and at last I understood everything.....everything; The Truth became clear and I was absorbed into it.....I saw first my mother my dear dear mother (in a whisper) as lovingly as ever we both gazed into one another's eyes..... Words are unnecessary afterwards, they convey nothing they become empty..... THOMAS ASHE was there for sure.....and THOMÁS my friend and comrade and you know I never seen a smile like the one on his face that greeted me then; ever before. I felt not surprise but something glorious when I saw MICHAEL FITZGERALD and JOE MURPHY for we had embarked on the hunger-strike in Cork Goal together and so at last we were back together but not as we were.....now a different kind of force that could at least comfort Ireland in her suffering.....They were all there, just standing with open arms.....all those I'd loved and played with in childhood and all my relations.....(Smiling) Ah but I knew I was in heaven when I saw my mother!

KIERAN Didn't you want to put your arms around her and comfort her?

TERENCE There is no pain when you go the only pain that is there (moves hands to indicate present sphere) is in the heart of God himself.....

KIERAN LOOKS ACROSS TO THE BED AND IS SADDENED

KIERAN But what about your wife and baby daughter how hurt were they; did their hurt ever go away?

TERENCE Hurt doesn't have a season nor a measured length of time... it's not a fashion, it's the same today (looking across at KIERAN'S parents) as it was yesterday because human nature doesn't change! Our MAÍRE was only a two year old child..... though she would experience the hurt later in life and MURIEL my beloved didn't feel as I did in politics, so it was harder for her to accept that I would die rather than give in to the British who had murdered and made slaves of the Irish people; so her hurt was two fold.....I died for Ireland.....some thought I should have lived

for my family.....and that pain never left MURIEL, no, not for a single waking moment of the rest of her life.

KIERAN That is my only concern and yet hearing you speak of it brings me so much peace. No family is strong enough to endure this pain alone. I feel certain now that I can watch over them and help them through whatever faces them after today.....

TERENCE PUTS HIS ARM AROUND KIERAN'S SHOULDER AS THEY BOTH GAZE OVER TO THE BED

ALFIE MARGARET, are you okay? Are you prepared..... to let go... now?

MARGARET I can't ALFIE, not now not ever.....two days ago he said as I held his hand "mum" it hurt him to speak, his lips were cracked and dry and sore, it really hurt..... "mum, sit by me and talk to me, you are always running away, tell me about everyone, do not waste time, do not waste a minute, let me enjoy these last days with you".....I wanted to wrap him in a blanket and hold him like I did when he was a baby.....when you was born son (Looking closely at KIERAN holding out her arms) these arms nursed you and fed you and kept you safe and warm; I changed you and loved you, I sang lullaby's to you and danced round the scullery with you to make you laugh.....then as time passed you and MICHAEL and TERENCE and ROISIN and MAIREAD watched as I did that same dance around the scullery with BRENDAN..... our family now complete.....you'd all laugh and clap.....(pause then looking at ALFIE) you mightn't remember this ALFIE but, when he (rubs KIERAN'S hand) was cutting his first tooth he was in so much pain and one night we'd run out of the medicine and he cried and cried and there was no pacifying him and I got up and walked from room to room with him wrapped in the blue blanket that auntie KATHLEEN had bought for MICHAEL.....

remember..... each of our children were wrapped in it at some stage, because it was a soft material and felt good to the skin.....I can see them all now rubbing the back of their necks against it, it must have felt so comforting for a tiny baby.....

MARGARET GETS UP AND WALKS TO EDGE OF STAGE AND LOOKS AT CEILING AND BACK OF ROOM AS SHE TALKS
CONTINUE:

Anyway ALFIE, that one night a real fear came over me and looking back it must have been some sort of a premonition, I can feel a shiver go through me now as it did then (rubs her arms) and I prayed and ask God to help and protect our KIERAN, he was so long and skinny and, not just because he was a baby, but as a mother I could feel this.....helplessness about him ALFIE, and when he finally fell asleep (shows with arms how she set him in cot) I gently put him back into his cot and wrapped the blanket securely round him so the warmth and softness would content him until he'd waken for his next bottle later on..... I got back into bed beside you (smiles) and you were sound asleep and as I put my arm around you KIERAN began to cry again and I jumped up so not to wake you I lifted him back out of the cot and noticed a trickle of blood from between his lip; it stained the blanket..... the stain never washed off no matter how many times I washed it..... and I always remembered that night, for some reason it stuck in the back of my mind.....always..... when I'd wrap the girls up in that wee blanket I'd remember (laughs) KIERAN'S his first tooth..remember now..... you should.....you must..... remember! Then I woke you to let you feel the tooth and I put KIERAN, wrapped in that little blue blanket..... in between us.....(in a whisper) to sleep warm and loved (closes her eyes tightly) and ours and safe.....I wanted to take away all his pain and just keep him wrapped in that blue.....soft.....clean blanket.....I wish with all my heart ALFIE that that blue blanket was the only blanket I'd have to remember him wrapped in.....

ALFIE GETS UP LIFTS THE PRISON BLANKET FROM THE BOTTOM OF BED WALKS TO MARGARET AND PUTS IT AROUND THEM BOTH

ALFIE You wrapped him in our love with that blue blanket dear.....and then all these years later here in this hell we wrapped ourselves with KEIRAN in this blanket only this one is grey and coarse and irritates the flesh and corrupts the mind and yet in an imaginary way it protected our son's nakedness from the viciousness that it was meant to inflict on his innermost wounds; when his mouth bled from the beatings the blood trickled to the blanket and stuck to his skin as he would try to comfort himself in it; maybe he remembered that blue blanket that was wrapped around his naked body then...with love.....our love. But this (holding the edge

of blanket out) this has failed MARGARET it has failed to do what THATCHER tried to do to the whole Irish nation because BOBBY, FRANCIS, PATSY, RAYMOND, JOE, MARTIN, KEVIN and now our KIERAN and TOM and MICKY all wore The Blanket with pride..... they transformed it from an enemy's weapon into a cloak of honour.....a cloak that any slave would have cherished more than a garment bought and paid for with another man's wounds or another man's gold.....it's become a symbol of resistance a symbol of what is in every man and woman who is involved in humanity.....true humanity!

THEY BOTH EMBRACE WITHIN THE BLANKET

LIGHTS OUT

BREAK FOR 10 MINS

ACT 2

KIERAN IS NOW STANDING AT BACK OF MONUMENT LEANING ON IT FACING AUDIENCE, TERENCE IS STILL STANDING AT FRONT (FACING AUDIENCE) RIGHT HAND SIDE OF MONUMENT, MARGARET AND ALFIE ARE SEATED AT BEDSIDE AND ANNIE MacSWINEY IS IN SAME POSITION ON GROUND

LIGHT ON ANNIE

ANNIE (To audience) I keep all these things in my heart and yet I have this need in me to say them out for the whole world to hear.... for I.....we..... all our family love and hold our brother TERRY in the highest esteem that any man could be held by his family. TERRY taught us how we should care for others, he taught us how we must love Ireland and do what is right for her and for all her people: north and south, men and woman, protestant, catholic, those who stay in our country and those who leave for a better life.....TERRY embraces all the differences that can and should make us truly a nation among nations.....he taught us to love all small nations with great respect and this is where his love for Ireland has took him..... (puts her head down) to a terrible death such as this has been.....he still breaths but his body lies still and motionless.....(change of tone) his spirit is free and I feel it all around me.....all week they have refused MARY and MURIEL a visit saying it would disturb them (slight laugh) they know nothing of what disturbs us.....LLOYDE GEORGE just doesn't care and it's as simple as that..... but he knows and

understands perfectly that being masters in an Empire is as much about conditioning the mind-set of the oppressed and keeping their spirit down as it is about physically disarming and controlling them; he tries to make puppets of people. He knows if TERRY ended his hunger strike then that will serve a great blow to the Irish morale. (Pause) I also believe it is cowardly of him to reject the plea from King GEORGE in using his Royal Prerogative to have TERRY released knowing as he does that the King already has a guilty conscience about his Russian cousin Nicholas and now wants to redeem himself by doing some good in saving someone's life that is within his grasp! (Shouts) Hypocrisy and lies surround us..... Our sister Mary went all the way to Portsmouth to the Trade Union Congress in hope that she be allowed to address the congress to actively do something to have TERRY released unconditionally but even among the great and the good she was denied her 3 minutes to put her plea before this great assembly by the TUC president JH THOMAS who told the congress that she was in a bad way and he did not think it fair that she should address the congress least it upset her more.....I ask myself if this man is for or against us.....it seems to me that he didn't want to upset the government.....and he a Welsh man too! It seems a life time ago when I accompanied MURIEL and baby MÁIRE to Belfast to see TERRY in the prison there, his first time to see and hold his baby daughter, I looked into his eyes as he held her and I saw his tears.....he will not see her again in this world....(Whispers) And now my final words are my prayer..... there seems nothing left but prayer..... Blessed Mother Mary.....(cries striking her breast) To thee do we cry..... poor children of Eve!.....(Puts her head down still crying)

LIGHT FADES SLOWLY FROM ANNIE AND ONTO MONUMENT

TERENCE My sisters Annie and Mary were sensible and outspoken girls they lived their lives for Ireland and for equality for women they believed strongly in the suffragette's movement.....(Smiling) You know KIERAN, my most favourite place on earth was the bridge across the River Lee that runs through Cork; (reminiscing) I'd stand on the North Gate Bridge.....and watch and dream.....(whispers) My Own Lovely Lee it became a sort of anthem for all Cork men.....DICK BARRETT sang it as he was led to his execution in Mountjoy.....perhaps it soothed LIAM, RORY and JOE on

their final march together (deep sigh) When I was a young boy I'd spend hours sometimes watching transfixed at the never ending flow of that river..... I never tired of that feeling of awe: peace, confusion, resignation, inspiration that it brought me; it seemed endless..... that slow and then sometimes swift flow, like love; you know sometimes it happens all at once and other times it happens slowly.....something that once you see and recognise.....like God's Love.....my mother's love... and later I equated it with my love.....my love for Ireland and the desire I felt to do good for her through her people...and for her people (in a whisper) endless KIERAN endless!

KIERAN We've a river too, ours runs through Andytown, from up there (points) the Black mountain we call it.....when the sky above it is overcast it looks almost black.....and just look at it.... the lime stone has been quarried so much leaving that gap at the top....it looks like a giant has bitten off a large slice.....(pause) here's the field I played hurly in with our MICHAEL and TERENCE.....all throughout our childhood.....until the tanks and guns came and it all changed.

TERENCE Cork always had the tanks and guns, they were everywhere you looked. Resistance was a way of life and it became easier when we became organised.....

KIERAN Same here TERENCE, I was only turned 14 when the Brits arrived and 15 not even 16 when I joined the Fianna, I felt this passion burning inside me and it overtook everything I enjoyed before.....and I had this belief that we could win..... that we could overcome the system that..... until then I had known nothing about.....I believed that we could dismantle it and put in place our own system of Government that would give all our people what they deserved: equality and justice and employment but most of all our independence.....I'm only one.....I'm KIERAN DOHERTY and I believe.....I believe my death on hunger strike will do more to convince the world that we are Political Prisoners and we are about the freedom of our country.....and I take this belief with me to eternity.....

TERENCE Sixty one years.... then (points to ANNIE) and now (points to bed) and nothing has changed. I was so weak and ill from day one KIERAN

and I found it tough going, but I kept going for the thought of losing the battle seemed worse than dying itself.....my prison sentence was two year but I knew in my heart that had it been two months I still would have died because..... the cause was not about the Lord Mayor of Cork but about TRUTH and JUSTICE and FREEDOM for the Irish nation. I could not lose that battle! And do you know this KIERAN? During my final days as I went in and out of consciousness I heard music.....I thought it was a dream but it wasn't.....my brother SEAN told me a group of Irish musicians were doing vigil outside the front gate and played continuously to make my going easier.....it did..... for I felt I was being carried away by the depth of their music making.....and I was grateful.....Can you not hear it KIERAN.....listen.....listen closely.....

THEY BOTH LOOK FAR AWAY AS 'THE HARP THAT ONCE THROUGH TARA'S HALL' IS PLAYED SOFTLY IN BACK GROUND

KIERAN I was interned on my 17th birthday; some party that turned out to be; but I became politicised in Long Kesh and it stood by me for my later battles. I knew before leaving Long Kesh that I was a political prisoner inside and outside of prison, and no British soldier nor British propaganda machine would ever succeed in beating it out of me to make me accept that I was a criminal; inside or outside jail.

TERENCE You said earlier that you were ever only afraid once.....when was that?

KEIRAN It was a day in April '76 our unit was out on a bombing operation.....it went badly wrong.....you know yourself comrade sometimes things don't go as planned but usually it works out and everyone reaches base safely, but not this day.....(sighs) firstly MAIREAD was captured during the initial escape and myself and two others made our way to a nearby house to get a car..... Unfortunately, our comrade Sean was shot in the effort and he ordered us to go to leave him.....(softly) he was bleeding badly.... He held the people of the house at gunpoint to give us a chance to escape.....it was hard to obey that order but it was a soldier who gave it and I as a soldier obeyed it.....it was the hardest thing I've faced till now.....leaving him there alone I mean (deep sigh) His courage was unequalled to anyone I had personally ever known. SEAN

ordered us to leave, he knew death was near... and we obeyed him.... I ask myself later in the early hours below a cloudless sky when I knew he was dead what is this desire for freedom in us that we give our lives without hesitation to achieve it. And I was afraid because I had no answer, then!
.....I faced death many times before and since that day.....and still I have no fear of death because I believe in the cause for which I'm now about to die.....The shroud of the hunger-striker has been woven by the pain and misery caused by the 800 years of the occupation of our country; if we do nothing those 800 years will become 1000 years and after 1000 years there will be no country worthy of the name Ireland on any map.....a British annex perhaps but no such people called Irish!

MARGARET Do you remember ALFIE the night before his 17th birthday....they came to Intern him.....remember.....you told them they couldn't take him because he was still only 16 and you showed them his birth certificate.....remember.....they raided and wrecked.....BRENDAN sat huddled up to me frightened...I shouldn't be looking back like this ALFIE.....should I (looking at ALFIE but no response then looking at KIERAN whispers) KIERAN (strokes his head gently) every night before me and your daddy went to bed I'd open the hall door, summer, winter, rain or snow and I'd look across at the M1 and say a prayer and blow a kiss to you and I never told you that because..... In my heart I knew you'd know this, and when I'd look up at the sky on a clear night I'd feel a sense of joy or something because..... I knew if you were looking up too you'd see what I could see.....somewhere greater than where we both found ourselves in at that moment.....at that exact moment (stroking his head again) I'm glad son that I've written down things you said last week.....in a page but engraved on my heart.....
(head down softly crying) forever.....

TERENCE I spent some time Belfast.....in the Crumlin road goal, in fact it was there that I saw my beautiful daughter for the first time.....when I held her in my arms I was near to tears, afterwards to mark the occasion I wrote her this poem, Máire I called it: Baby, baby, sweet and wise deeper than the morning skies is the wonder of your eyes. While we pause before his wonder all life's cares must.....drop asunder.....(deep sigh)

KIERAN I was not as fortunate as you comrade in that respect. (Change of tone) Did you know anyone from Belfast.....

TERENCE Quite a few KEIRAN though our paths never crossed again after my release but a girl I once corresponded with taught in St Mary's Training College, she lodged at number 6 Springfield Road, PAULINE HENLEY, how I looked forward to her letters, she made me laugh and I'd read her letters over and over when I was in Reading jail after 1916.....she understood how bad I felt not going ahead with the raising in Cork.....Cork felt badly.....but what could we do.....I was second in command to Thomás and a soldier always obeys the last order he receives. MacNeill made a mess of everything by countermanding the original ordersand he an Antrim man too! Thomás and myself thought we were doing the right thing.....but perhaps in doing the right thing we did the wrong thing.....we'll never know now what was right and what was wrong for that whole Easter week.....the feeling stayed with me to my dying day.....Cork rebel Cork took no part in the Easter Rising.....(sighs)

KEIRAN I never wanted a role in the leadership.....I was a volunteer and that's where I was suited.....we worked and trained in units and part of the units were usually made up of with ourselves and Cumann na mBan volunteers and we were a great team up in the first battalion, MAIREAD and DEE and then when I was lifted and sentenced in '76.....the fight for me was now fought in a different battle field.....the British Government knew when they created the H Blocks that it was strategically a new and defining battle field...and we fought hard every single day and night there was no let up at all.....when they scrubbed us naked on the floor you knew.....you just knew they were trying to scrub out every inch of patriotic defiance in us.....but our defiance our commitment and perseverance was somewhere in us that these people could never reach.....they had no experience of this thing this burning desire for the freedom of country that we have.... they just don't comprehend it.....we are beyond their understanding.....But we could see them and what burned them up and it was this.....it was bigotry and pure unadulterated hatred and it blinded them to what they were attempting to do for their pay masters, you see, when they stripped us of our cloths and laughed and sneered at us all they really achieved was to stripe

themselves of their humanity.....and that is my belief! Now it's nearly over for me.....and all I ask of my comrades is that they do not let my sacrifice be in vain.....I want them to use it wisely.....and when they remember me and JOE, PATSY, BOBBY, FRANCIE, KEVIN, RAY, MARTIN and soon TOM and MICHAEL, to be not sad, because, we died gladly for them and.....for all.

AWARE OF MOVEMENT ON THE BED KIERAN AND TERENCE BOTH MOVE TO

LEFT HAND SIDE NEAR END OF STAGE WATCHING BED. ANNIE STANDS UP AND

JOINS THEM, LIGHT ON THEM IS DIM. MICHEAL (KIERAN'S BROTHER) STANDS

IN DOORWAY WITH CUP AND SAUCER IN HAND MARGARET LOOKS AROUND

ALFIE MARGARET, go on out and have that cup of tea dear.....

MARGARET STANDS AND PUTS A KISS ON HER FINGER AND PLACES THE FINGER ON KIERAN'S LIPS THEN EXITS TAKING CUP FROM MICHAEL. ENTER MICHAEL TO WHERE MARGARET WAS SITTING. HE TAKES KIERAN'S HAND AND LOOKS AT HIM SMILING. SPIRIT KIERAN EXITS STAGE AS VOICE OVER OF KIERAN IN BED LETS OUT A LOUD SIGH AND LIGHTS GO OUT, THEN TWO SECONDS APART VOICE OVERS ARE PLAYED

KIERAN Loud sigh at death

KIERAN V/O Mum, it was just a step to the other side.....(Whispers) A straight walk forward.....I'm free at last!

TERENCE V/O I will put a limit to any term of imprisonment you may impose.....I have decided the terms of my detention whatever your government may do. I shall be free, alive or dead, within a month.

V/O This fire still burns within our land.....and within the hearts of those..... brave men and women who kept it lit and whose spirit never failed....to keep it alive in song or verse or from an unmarked grave the memory of our patriot dead who died in freedoms fight with pike in hand or armalite.....or

in the gloom of a prison cell those who fought and died on hunger-strike.
(burst of thunder)

Both T&K It is not those who can inflict the most, but those who can suffer the most.....who will conquer.....

BIN LIDS BANGING LOUDLY FOR ABOUT 30 SECONDS

LIGHTS ON: SONG OPTIONAL: I'LL WEAR NO PRISON UNIFORM.

END

Roseleen Walsh © 2015

Conversation Between Winifred Carney and Siobhán O'Hanlon

This is a one act play that is about 5 minutes long. There are 4 actresses, 2 young girls and two older. The scene takes place in The Women's Garden in the Roddy MacCorley Club Grounds.

A young 12-14 year old girl is admiring the garden dedicated to Irish Republican Women, she walks around reading the names and then sits down on a bench and falls asleep. She dreams and in her dream she sees Winnie Carney and Siobhán O Hanlon in the garden talking to one another.

SIOBHÁN Tell me this Winnie did you know Countess Markievicz well?

WINNIE I did indeed Siobhán, I knew her during and after the Rising.....a remarkable woman; she was in everything but the crib as we would say, I bet she was in the crib, when she was at school, probably acting the part of Mary. Her privileged status opened doors for her and her sister Eva.....but I have to say it didn't lessen their humanity, no, they like their father, were always kind and compassionate to those less fortunate. She was a good and genuine socialist who believed passionately in an Ireland that would be: Irish, Gaelic and free. She told me that her father never evicted a tenant off their land in Sligo and that none went hungry who worked for Henry Gore-Booth during the famine. And off course Siobhán, she and I had much in common.....we were political prisoners at the same time and we were hunger strikers as well.....a terrible thing to have to do.....and it's even more terrible when you watch others do it.....it left its mark on Con and I think that's when her health began to fail. She died in '27, penniless and in a hospital ward for the poor as she chose, she'd given every last penny away to those in need; but she died

happy surrounded by family and friends, Dr Kathleen Lynn attended to her and Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington was there also; and a cruel thing the Free State Government did, they refused to give her the State funeral she deserved.....but no matter, over 300,000 loyal admirers attended and walked with us all to lay her to rest in Glasnevin.

SIOBHÁN I knew most of these women (points around garden) whose names are in this garden and they like Markievicz cared about others and so they lived and died for Ireland. They were all courageous women, girls really, young women with lives in front of them (points to where Anne Parkers name is) I was only 9 years old when Anne Parker died, she was transporting a bomb; only 18 years old and trying to avoid hurting civilians (pause) I remember standing along the Falls Road with family watching as her coffin was carried into Milltown Cemetery to the republican plot and hearing people talk about what had happened her*. It stuck with me and much later when I saw her photograph in the papers and read about her short life I knew I wanted to be like her. I seemed to understand what Anne Parker was about. We had never met and yet I identified with her because but back then getting your house raided and wrecked and your father dragged bare footed into a sarsen and beaten and interned made you think differently from other young kids who didn't experience these terrible things happen to their families.

*(Anne Parker died as she and her comrade Michael Clarke were taking the bomb she'd just planted in a wholesalers back to base. Anne saw that there were too many civilians at risk and decided to abort the operation altogether. The bomb went off prematurely as they went over a ramp in the road; it is commendable that many young girls out of admiration for the bravery of Anne Parker put their names forward to join Cumman na mBan knowing the risk to their lives)

WINNIE What inspired me was James Connolly. I was his secretary, but I became so much more than that, though, being secretary to a man like James was good enough for anyone for their entire life; he was able to bring men together who would never have been in the same room together had it not been for his influence. He had the gift of being able to bring goodness and principle out in everyone. I was close to his daughter Nora when she started up Cumann na mBan here in Belfast and I was also a friend to his

wife Lily and it mattered to her that I stayed with him to the end in the GPO, Lily thanked me after they executed him.

SIOBHÁN Sometime after I was released from Armagh Goal where I spent 4 years on an explosives charge I became secretary to the President of Sinn Féin, and I know what you mean, I used my office to help everyone who came for help, it was a great tool. It was a privilege and an honour to help my community here in West Belfast; people flocked to our office from everywhere, sometimes waiting in the pouring rain for it to open. We knew that it marked the beginning of something great that would benefit all our people and from that tiny office flourished the seeds of an advancing politicised community of activism; in fact I was a party to the first Sinn Féin delegation team in Downing Street.

WINNIE Siobhán we need a longer talk; later perhaps. This wee girl is about to waken up!

THEY SMILE AT ONE ANOTHER AS ANOTHER YOUNG GIRL WALKS OVER AND WAKENS GIRL ON BENCH

GIRL Aíne, you wanna see the dream I've just had, it was about two girls one called Siobhán and the other was called Winnie; it was so real, sit down till I tell you all about it.....

END

OUR IRISH CULTURE

I was asked by the Belfast National Graves if I could think of something to put into their Ceili Mor to celebrate the centenary of the Rising and this is what I came up with.

THE SCENE BEGINS IN DARKNESS.

THERE ARE 3 ACTRESS.

OLD WOMAN (IRISH PEOPLE)

SINGER (IRISH HISTORY)

DANCER (IRISH CULTURE)

OLD WOMAN IS SEATED IN ROCKING CHAIR STAGE LEFT AND
SINGER IS STANDING STAGE RIGHT.

BRÍD (As lights slowly go up she softly and slowly sings and plays Bodhrán in background as old woman speaks)

Óró sé do Bheatha Abhaile

Sé do bheatha a bhean ba léanmhar
B'é ár gcreach tú bheith i ngéibheann
Do dhúiche bhreá bheith i seilibh meirleach
'S tú díolta leis na Gallaibh.

Curfá:

Óró sé do bheatha 'bhaile
Óró sé do bheatha 'bhaile
Óró sé do bheatha 'bhaile
Anois ar theacht an tsamhraidh.

Tá Gráinne Mhaol ag tíocht thar sáile
Oglaigh armtha leí mar ghárda
Gaeil iad féin is ní Gaill ná Spáinnigh
Is cuirfid ruaig ar Ghallaibh.

Curfá:

A bhuí le Rí na bhFeart go bhfeiceann
Muna mbeam beo in a dhiaidh ach seachtain
Gráinne Mhaol is míle gaiscíoch
Ag fógairt fáin ar Ghallaibh.

Curfá:

OR IN ENGLISH

Welcome Oh woman who was so afflicted,
It was our ruin that you were in bondage,
Our fine land in the possession of thieves,
And sold to the foreigners

Chorus:

Óró! You are welcome home!
Óró! You are welcome home!
Óró! You are welcome home!

Now that summer is coming
Grainne Mhaol is coming over the sea,
Armed warriors along with her as guard,
They are Irishmen, not English or Spanish,
And they will rout the foreigners

Chorus:

May it please the God of Miracles that we may see,

Although we only live a week after it,
Grainne Mhaol and a thousand warriors,
Dispersing the foreigners
Chorus:

LIGHTS OUT BRID AND ON MONICA

MONICA When I was small, I know not what age I might have been as I watched with my two brothers and three sisters from behind our hawthorn bush as my father sobbed and cried. Our mother in shock could not comfort him nor the six of us hiding; I being the 2nd youngest, had been brought by the hand with our Maíre to seek refuge in the first instant because we were afraid and then as time and events lapsed we remained in hiding out of respect for our father for we knew in our hearts that it would have been rubbing salt in his wounds if he knew we were watching; for no man ever before had as much as a disagreement with our father. These men now beat and humiliated him and I cannot bear to say the extent of his humiliation that day in front of our mother, the woman he loved and respected and who loved and respected him. I have a need in me to weep now to think of this terrible scene.

That was in 1840 and we could not have foreseen a worse situation than being evicted from our rightful home by foreigners and left to the mercy of relations and friends, most of whom ended up in the same predicament. But worse came in 1845 and we lay on road sides eating the grass and dying, we were ravished by famine caused by potato blight and left to plead and beg the mercy of those same human beings who stole our homes and land and work and everything we held dear and sacred; we begged for the scraps they fed their hounds with.

I was the only survivor in my family. I experienced the coffin ships and there was no one there to care if I lived or died. When I reached America, I could not speak one word of English. I communicated by singing and dancing. My mother and father taught all their children to be Irish, to be proud to be Irish and to always be Irish and never to deny that we were Irish. We are a noble race, a spiritual people, a people of culture and simplicity and lovers of truth. I danced when I was among strangers to be understood and I sang in my own Irish tongue that informed the stranger that I could speak, though not in their tongue but in the tongue of my own people from that far off mystical

island of Eire. We own our dance and our song; England can have no such boast; nor will they ever take that inner spirit that sings and dances away from us and that makes us who we are!

MONICA STANDS AND RECEITS 'THE IRISH DANCER' (anonymous)

Continues:

I am of Ireland..... and of the holy land of Ireland.....Good sir, pray I thee, for of saint charity, come and dance with me.....in Ireland.

BRÍD PLAYS BODHRAN GRAUDALLY LOUDER AND SINGS FASTER AND LOUDER: ORÓ SÉ DO BHEATHA BHAILE (LIGHTS ON FLOOR) AS BOTH DANCERS DANCE ONTO FLOOR. CLIOHNDA AND CARAGH DANCE (FREE STYLE) AND ARE JOINED BY MONICA AS SONG ENDS. BRID PLAYS AND SINGS SLOWER THEN SAYS

"WE HAVE THE SONG AND THE MUSIC.....YOU (pointing to audience) HAVE THE DANCE.....NOW LETS PUT IT ALL TOGETHER IN UNISON AND ENJOY OUR CULTURE.....NOT JUST HERE, NOT JUST FOR NOW.....BUT WHEREVER WE IRISH FIND OURSELVES.....WITH OUR OWN CULTURE WE ARE NEVER ALONE"

THE PRICE OF AN EASTER LILY

I was asked by Loretta McKee if I'd write a play for her 'Still Imprisoned' women's group as their contribution to the Easter Rising centenary. Loretta wanted the group to perform and produce the play using it as one of several projects the group were involved in. I was very happy to do this and though it was hard work for all of us the achievement reached was outstanding. The title is important to me because it asks the question 'How do we know the real price we pay for our beliefs'.....

Act 1

Scene 1

FOUR GIRLS IN UNIFORM: 1 CUMANN NA mBAN AND 3 YOUNG CUMANN NA gCAILÍNÍ ARE SITTING ON LOG IN FOREST CENTRE OF STAGE. THEY ARE HAVING A CULTURAL LECTURE WHICH INVOLVES SONGS AND POETRY AND WEAPONARY. Song: Bold Fenian Men Played in background before scene begins. Scene begins with voice over.

1st V/O 1917 and the flame lit by men like Tomas Clarke and our other brave patriots, though they died, that flame did not die with them. Their

memory and what they attempted to do to redeem the Irish Nation and make it whole again shines from their grave and has enlightened generations since. They understood that the culture of Irishness needs always to be nourished and lived, least it is lost, as the British so wanted, for they tried to drain it, destroy it, kill it and then replace it with their own unholy plants. We see in this scene how young the girls are who hunger for knowledge about their country and to live a way of life that is totally Irish. And so we begin.

C.na mB You each know the importance of learning all aspects of our culture and history through song, poetry and dance; (looks for reaction) now, is there anything or any one of our patriots you want to know more about during this lecture?..... Ask me first and then I'll test all three of you afterwards to see what you've learned from last week...ok then.

AÍNE (Puts her hand up) Yes Miss Connolly, I'd like to know more about Robert Emmet.....because my granda is always reciting at our family gatherings this here:.....(clears her throat and stands up at edge of stage) 'Let no man write my epitaph; for as no man who knows my motives dare now vindicate them, let not prejudice or ignorance asperse them. Let them and me rest in obscurity and peace; and my tomb remain uninscribed and my memory in oblivion until other times and other men can do justice to my character. When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then, and not till then let my epitaph be written.....and he always stops and then when everyone is staring at him he says in a kind of a whisper.....(takes deep breath) I have done.....he always says that wee bit...always! And Miss Connolly my mam told me to tell you that I say my night prayers in Irish and that I pray for all the brave 1916 men who died for Ireland, fighting to rid her from the British!

C.na mB Very impressive Aíne, I'm very proud of you. Now, I'll sing the song written by a balladeer called Thomas Maguire in honour of our great Irish hero, Robert Emmet: (Aíne sits as C.na mB stands)

Bold Robert Emmet

The struggle is over, the boys are defeated,
Old Ireland's surrounded with sadness and gloom,
We were defeated and shamefully treated,
And I, Robert Emmet, awaiting my doom.

Hung, drawn and quartered, sure that was my sentence,
But soon I will show them no coward am I.

My crime is the love of the land I was born in,
A hero I lived and a hero I'll die.

Chorus: Bold Robert Emmet, the darling of Ireland,
Bold Robert Emmet will die with a smile,
Farewell companions both loyal and daring,
I'll lay down my life for the Emerald Isle.

The barque lay at anchor awaiting to bring me
Over the billows to the land of the free; A hero I lived and a hero I'll die.

Chorus:

But I must see my sweetheart for I know she will cheer me,
And with her I will sail far over the sea.

But I was arrested and cast into prison,
Tried as a traitor, a rebel, a spy;
But no man can call me a knave or a coward,
A hero I lived and a hero I'll die.

Chorus:

Hark! I the bell's tolling, I well know it's meaning,
My poor heart tells me it is my death knell;
In come the clergy, the warder is leading,
I have no friends here to bid me farewell.
Goodbye, old Ireland, my parents and sweetheart,
Companions in arms to forget you must try;
I am proud of the honour, it was only my duty-
A hero I lived and a hero I'll die.

Chorus

TURNS TO GIRLS AND SAYS AS SHE SITS DOWN:

CONTINUE:

The sweetheart Robert Emmet refers to is called Sarah Curran and someone not mentioned in the song is his housekeeper, Anne Devlin. Anne was tortured by the Red Coats who wanted her to inform on him and she refused and endured much suffering because of this..... Now you Sinead, what have you been learning. Stand up and tell us!

SINEAD I found this poem in a book my mother had and it was passed

down to her by her Aunt Sarah from Scotland. (Clears throat) It's called The Irish Dancer and there was no name to say who wrote it:

I am of Ireland,
And of the holy land
Of Ireland.
Good sir, pray I thee,
For of saint charity,
Come and dance with me
In Ireland.

And now I want to show you the dance I've been practicing all week. I'm not very good at it yet, but, I know how important our dancing is to our Irish Culture, Miss Connolly.

BOTH GIRLS AND TEACHER HUM DANCE TUNE THEN SINEAD BEGINS TO DANCE AS AÍNE AND MAÍRE C.na mB. CLAP IN TIME TO MUSIC UNTIL DANCE IS OVER. SINEAD SITS AND CAIT WALKS TO EDGE OF STAGE.

CAIT (Speaks very fast) Miss Connolly, I've been practicing this song all week and my sister says that I've been singing it in my sleep and wakening her up and she's getting fed up with me and I says to her that it's just as well it's a song and not a dance otherwise I'd be kicking her and my other four sisters who sleep with us in the same bed, 'cus then they'd be getting up with bruises all over them (laughs) and the neighbours would all be talking about us saying my daddy was giving us hidings...(clears her throat and sings: The Minstrel Boy by Thomas Moore about Robert Emmet.

The Minstrel Boy to the war is gone,
In the ranks of the dead you'll find him;
His father's sword he has girded on
And his wild harp slung behind him.
"Land of song" said the warrior bard,
"Though all the world betray thee,
One sword, at least, thy rights shall guard,
One faithful harp shall praise thee."
The Minstrel fell-but the foeman's chain
Could not bring his proud soul under;

The harp he lov'd ne'er spoke again,
For he tore its chords asunder;
And said, "No chains shall sully thee,
Thou soul of love and bravery,
Thy songs were made for the pure and free,
They shall never sound in slavery."

Continue:

Miss Connolly, my mam says that a great Irish writer by the name of Thomas Moore wrote that song about Robert Emmet 'cause he knew him, is that right? Miss Connolly? (Cait, sits down)

C.na mB (Moves over to edge of stage) Yes you're right Cait, Thomas Moore and Emmet knew one another from Trinity and Moore was inspired by Emmet and wrote that song about him and he also wrote another about Sarah Curran the love of Emmets life after Emmet was hung drawn and quartered.....I forget the tune but I remember the words and so beautiful they are: They go like this.....She is far from the land where her young hero sleeps, / and lovers around her are sighing, / but coldly she turns from their gaze, and weeps, / for her heart in his grave is lying.// She sings the wild songs of her dear native plains, / every note which he loved awaking: / Ah! Little they think who delight in her strains, / how the heart of the minstrel is breaking! // He had lived for his love, for his country he died,/ they were all that to life had entwined him; / nor soon shall the tears of his country be dried,/ nor long will his love stay behind him. // O, make her a grave where the sunbeams rests / when they promise a glorious morrow; / they'll shine o'er her sleep, like a smile from the west, from her own loved island of sorrow!

SINEAD Oh Miss Connolly you have made us so hungry for more knowledge about our history, tell us more now that we have come out of the cultural famine that the British inflicted upon us. We need to know about what being Irish means.....about who we are!

C.na.mB Each week we will learn more and more (smiling) now I want you to listen closely to the third verse of this song. It is a song written about the mountain Slievenamon, in County Tipperary, and some still call it The Women's Mountain because there is something magical about it especially

when the clouds hanging low turn to mist and gently nourish the living veins of tree and turf and all that the Fenians saw and gathered and held high in this fair land of our fathers. The song is called Slievenamon and was written by Charles J. Kickham.

Alone all alone by the wave washed strand, and alone in the crowded hall. The hall it is gay, and the waves they are grand, but my heart is not here at all! It flies far away, by night and by day, to the time and the joys that are gone! And I never can forget the sweet maiden I met, in the Valley near Slievenamon. In the festive hall, by the star-watched shore, ever my restless spirit cries: "My love oh my love, shall I ne'er see you more? And, my land, will you never arise?" By night and by day, I ever, ever, pray, While lonely my life flows on, To see our flag unrolled, and my true love to enfold, in the Valley near Slievenamon.

FOUR GIRLS STAND TOGETHER AND MARCH OF STAGE TO ORDERS FROM CAIT:

SLUA, DO RÉIR DHEIA.....CLÉ MÁIRSEÁIL....CLÉ CLÉ CLÉ MÁIRSEÁIL..... LIGHTS OUT.

Act 1

Scene 2 (Rioting is heard in back-ground: at end of scene both rioting and song are heard (in echo) 'On the one Road')

V/O The real scene is set within a place the world outside couldn't see into, which was the heart and soul of a people longing for the independence to reunite them with their own people in a united Ireland. The Divis Street riots of 1964 was the catalyst for the earnest organising of a group of men and women, young boys and young girls, who understood that being submissive to the status quo which governed them as second class citizens in the 50 years of Unionist misrule in their own country was no longer going to keep them chained in the slave mentality; they came together and lit a flame that would not be extinguished even if the consequences were to be defeat. Everything costs something; debts must be paid to past generations who paid dearly and when they were robbed of everything they owned they paid with their own blood to redeem what was theirs. Ireland and her people have paid the ultimate price for freedom. And so we begin.

MARY (Waving two odd shoes in hands shouting) BRIGID..... BRIGID

HANNON.....BRIGID over here!

BRIGID Oh my God.....MARY...MARY McGUIGAN.....didn't think I'd see you so soon all this way across the town.... MARY (shaking her head) where's this all goin to end. The peelers are beatin our men and young lads up Barrack Street.....but they're so brave they're beatin them back.....some only school boys MARY.....14 year olds if they're a day.....and from everywhere: Old Lodge, Markets, Short Strand, Beechmount, Ballymurphy and as far up as Andersonstown. MADGES house is like a field hospital.....bodies lyin across everywhere..... the first aiders are doing a great job.

MARY I know BRIGID sure I'm over lookin out for my own, I can't keep that FRANCIE one in; he's with his daddy so I hope he's all right.....please God.....JOHN will help all the Ardoyne ones to get back home later when it's died down a bit.....hopefully it will die down for the night soon.....but BRIGID look at that crowd..... what are we goin to do when this is over? There's no stoppin us now.....this is the start and with the 50th anniversary of the rising in two year time BRIGID.....(deep sigh) I just wish WINNIE CARNEY were still alive..... she could tell a tale or two about it all.....but, she took most of her secrets to the grave!

BRIGID Well MARY we'll just have to work harder at gettin things set up. You know all the people from over your way and how vulnerable Ardoyne and the Bone are.....when things begin to get bad they'll look to you MARY and other republicans to organise and defend both areas..... you know MARY.....I've a foreboding that it won't be too long a wait till bigger attacks start happenin now that the Unionists have a mouth piece like that man Paisley.....(slight laugh) MARY.....we're just goin to have to sell a lot more Easter Lily's for next year and get people who buy them to understand what it stands for to wear one and to be proud of the men and women who fought and died for us all during Easter week 1916.

MARY (Holding out both shoes) Look at these shoes BRIGID some poor mothers are probably still payin for them and who ever owns them won't be able to go to school in the mornin barefooted! What are we like BRIGID? 1964 and still we struggle for everything: for food....for the money to pay our rent.....to cloth our children.....to keep our families

warm.....strugglin to make ends meet.....strugglin to get a decent house.....a job.....everything' a struggle. And we're strugglin to be accepted politically.....we're strugglin to cast off the oppression of this Orange state that tries to keep us down.....and soon BRIGID we'll struggle to survive another pogrom.....as bad as ever it was in the 20's.....but.....at this moment lookin down that road for whoever owns these shoes we can be certain that we'll fight back this time with a determination that won't allow us to stop until we win once and for all!

BRIGID MARY, when this settles down and the election is over we'll get a meetin with all the Belfast Cumman na mBan and begin to work out a new recruitment strategy; we need dedicated women and young girls now more than ever. The young girls will have to be brave and patient and to be trained on every weapon we hold; they will have to learn the ways of war.....unfortunately; for they will have to learn to give up much of their youth and maybe their freedom or even their lives.....Give me the shoes MARY, I'll leave them at the corner of Lesson Street and maybe whoever owns them might come along and find them there before tomorrow.

MARY Hopefully we might all find what we're lookin for....sooner rather than later BRIGID; anyway, '66 is only a stone's throw away!

BRIGID A stone throw away MARY, we're always throwing stones aren't we?

BOTH EMBRACE WHILE RIOTING IS STILL HEARD IN BACKGROUND

Act 1

Scene 3

SCENE BEGINS WITH VOICE OVER IN SMALL INTEROGATION ROOM.

V/O Easter 1966 the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising. Celebrations took place all over the country. In the North Terence O'Neill broke with tradition allowing Nationalist to fly the Tricolour for a week instead of the usual 24 hours on Easter Sunday '66. Easter fell on the 10th April and in two months' time loyalist anger and resentment towards Nationalist could not be contained resulting in the murders of three people: John Scullion, Peter Ward both from the Falls and Matilda Gould whose home the UVF mistakenly fire bombed instead of the Catholic owned pub next to it. The next scene takes place in Springfield Road Barracks which is only yards

away from Bombay St which was burned to the ground by loyalist mobs in August 1969. The rest as they say.....is history.

CLEANER ENTERS MOPPING FLOOR. SHE STOPS MOPPING AND BEGINS TO TALK TO AUDIENCE TIME AND YEAR ARE: EASTER SUNDAY 1966

CLEANER (looking at watch) Nearly time to go home and my GEORDIE will have the dinner ready and waitin on me. A couple of bottles of stout under the sink so they'll stay nice and cool for me and a read at the News of the World.....GEORDIE usually points out all the juicy bits for me.....you know so I don't have to read the whole paper and seein as its Easter he'll have got me a big Easter egg as a surprise.....he knows I love them.....and then...I can hardly wait to see this week's episode of Till Death Do Us Part.....honestly it's a geg.....Alf Garnett.....he's my GEORDIE'S hero.....my GEORDIE says he's like ENOCH POWELL.....my GEORDIE'S really smart and he's a very active member of our community.....our wonderful Orange community.....he's in everything but the crib.....the Orange Order, the Unionist Party though now he's thinkin of joining Mr Paisley's Church; my GEORDIE says that we need a leader like PAISLEY or ENOCH POWELL instead of O'NEILL he might even be (says like she's telling audience a secret) leavin the Party.....over what O'NEILL did.....do you all know about it? Imagine.....just imagine..... he went down to see that IRA leader LEMASS.....(loudly) in Dublin.....and then, the cheek of him he invites him up here to Stormont.....but Mr Paisley was up there outside Stormont to catch them on, he's not a bit soft Mr Paisley.....he's not a bit afraid of them he threw all the snowballs of the day at them.....anyway I'll go out here and see if big TREVOR will let me go now!

EXITS DOOR

ENTER RUC WOMAN WITH TWO PRISONERS SIGHLE AND UNA

RUC There now plenty of company today..... another of your friends is on her way.....(sarcastic laugh) should be here any minute (looks at her watch) you lot should have stayed in bed instead of selling that rubbish.....rubbish flogging rubbish! By the way you both better remove your

wee paper badges before the inspector arrives.....you surely have heard of him.....(threateningly) Mc CADDEN NED Mc CADDEN for if you don't remove them yourselves I can assure you he will.....

SIGHLE He will what.....let him try.....and we don't lie in bed on a Sunday we go to our mass so we would have been there anyway (sarcastic smile)

RUC Well you're not there now are you!

SIGHLE No and you're not in bed either.....are you.....(both girls laughing)

RUC Look, why do you bother with all this fantasy about an united Ireland.....(into their faces) this is Great Britain.....and there's no getting away from it.....you people are all insane.....if you want to be Irish go and live in Eiré.....you'll not get your health service paid for there and you lot need it with all the babies you produce every nine months of the year. You lot disgust me.....have you never heard of birth control?

SIGHLE AND UNA LOOK AT ONE ANOTHER IN DISGUST

TAKES DEEP SIGHS THEN LOOK AWAY FROM RUC WOMAN: CLEANER ENTERS DOOR WITH MOP IN HAND

CLEANER (Door knocks opens and head appears) Can I come in? Big TREVOR says I've to stay on for a while in case I'm needed (makes eye contact with RUC as if there might be rough treatment about to take place) AN ASIDE TO AUDIENCE:

My GEORDIE will be ragin he'll have to put my dinner in the oven!

RUC (Looking cleaner up and down) Sally, you're looking well in your Easter outfit, did your GEORDIE pick it himself for you out of the catalogue?

CLEANER Well, as a matter of fact, in fact, you mightn't believe this but, my GEORDIE was standin at the corner of Agnes street up the Shankill the other night havin a wee smoke with the lads when this here lorry went flyin by and guess what? Go on guess 'cause you'll never believe it, but the back doors flew open and a big box of new cloths fell out, yes, fell off the back of a lorry, it really did and my GEORDIE tried to return it but the lorry was too fast for him, you know with his bad leg and all, so I just couldn't believe our luck when he brought it home. Karma I think you call it; whoever that is!

RUC (Looking shocked, ignoring story) Well, you may as well get the overtime SALLY! Put your feet up somewhere and have a rest then come back in here later and you can give it a good clean!

CLEANER (Very drool) What do you mean.....I've already cleaned in here and I'm not doin it again...no matter what! (making eye contact with one another) I thought these two wee girls could be doin with a wee cuppa tea.....and maybe a biscuit.....or two...(off hand) bet you were at communion this morning and have had nothing to ate since.....

GIRLS LOOK AT ONE ANOTHER WITHOUT SPEAKING

CONTINUE:

(To RUC) Oh and I forgot..... came in to tell you that big TREVOR wants you..... (nods her head from side to side suggestively) he said there's another Easter Lily out in reception, he wants you to come personally and pick it up (mimicking order: RUC looks excited at prospect of seeing TREVOR) heh heh heh.....pick isn't that a pun or whatever.... he's a weird sense of humour hasn't he for a supposedly educated type of man, you see my GEORDIE explained the sig nif icants of that word pun and I'm not bein big headed or anything but I try to fit it in when it's suitable. (To prisoners) It's as well I'm not stupid girls or I'd be spendin my time fallin about all over the place here laughin.....(suggestively) some of them here are dirty pigs you know or you don't want to know.....(seriously) my GEORDIE told me to keep a mop in my hand at all times in here..... and my mouth closed.....tight!

RUC WOMAN ROLLS HER EYES

RUC (as she exits) Be back soon.....don't be talking too much Sally! (runs off excitedly)

UNA (She weighs up the CLEANER) You don't look like a soft kind of women who would take advice from the likes of that one (pointing at door)You look like you're your own woman.....(two girls give one another the eye)

CLEANER (Smiling) How can you tell that? You know that's what my GEORDIE always says.....I'm my own woman and my GEORDIE'S always right.....sure nearly every mornin when I come in here (pause)

through the back door (pause) whoever's on reception always asks me what my GEORDIE'S predictions are for the day.....and you know sometimes he's always right.....even about the weather.....if the BBC ever get rid of yer man WEATHERSPOON.....my GEORDIE would be up for the job! Now (seriously) go on tell me how were you able to tell that.....can you read faces?

UNA (Trying to stop laughing) It's the way you're holding onto your mop.....SALLY! Did I hear right.....is that what she called you? (SALLY nods) A lovely name for a lovely lady (SALLY smiles) how long have you been working here for, SALLY?

CLEANER Near 30 years love.....and I've seen plenty with just wanderin about the place with this here mop in me hand. You know you wouldn't believe this but I've had to mop up blood.....terrible it was but they told me that I'm covered with the Secrets Act.....I'm not allowed to repeat anything I hear inside these walls.....my GEORDIE says that includes how much sugar they all take in their tea.....it makes the job that bit more important (winks her eye) if you know what I mean!

SIGHLE Yes off course we know SALLY, it seems like an exciting job you've got here, bet you didn't know that before you started!

CLEANER (Whispers) Oh but I did. You see my uncle BILLY he used to clean and light the fire every morning for the old RUC the RIC it was called then.....Royal Irish Constabulary..... it was uncle BILLY who got me this job.....he'd some quare memories from here and when we were kids he'd scare us with all the stories he had about the place. He said there was a Chief Inspector called HARRISON and if uncle BILLY was told to keep the fire stacked up with wet slack for the night.....(girls repeat wet slack)

BOTH Wet slack.....(looking at one another)

CLEANER Yes that's right.....wet slack, because HARRISON was workin late, he said you would be sure to read in the papers the next day about murders or attacks on Catholics that had taken place through the night.....it was HARRISON'S wee squad and he had a wee room upstairs where they did all their planin and nobody was allowed into it.....it was kept locked all the times.....even BILLY wasn't allowed into clean it!

(Pause and change of tone, winks her eye as she vigorously mops a spot on floor) And another time he told us that he could remember an officer McKELVEY who was sent up from the country and his young son was named JOE, the boy would have called into see the father and sometimes bring him a packed lunch from the mother and you know the father died and the son became a bad boy he joined the rebels and went off to fight against the brave black and tans down in Dublin.....and you know (nodding her head) his own executed him and my uncle BILLY said he deserved all he got (pause) but BILLY remembere..... that..... he was a good boy at one time. (slight pause change of tone) You know, this reminds of another Easter Sunday.....I felt the same kind of forebodin then as I do now.....I shouldn't be rakin all these memories up (rubs her arms) I'm gettin the shivers just thinkin about it all.....

SIGHLE Go on SALLY tell us all you know.

CLEANER Well, poor auld PADDY MURPHY.....he was a good RUC man.....a Constable he was and he tripped over my bucket that Easter Sunday as they were all leavin to make arrests at the Easter Parade..... 1942.....and I called him all the stupid so and so' for not lookin where he was goin.... into myself like you know; I'd have got the sack if I'd spoken to a Constable like that...anyway was I sorry later when word came in that he'd been shot dead.....poor auld PADDY just across the way there in Clonard; anyway the screams and the shouts, and the tears, it was like somethin out of one of them horror movies that they're all talkin about...anyway all the uniformed boys with big boots on stood waitin on the culprits bein brought in.....I was waitin myself with the mop in my hand even though my shift was over and GEORDIE had my dinner waitin.....couldn't eat a thing when I got home, anyway the boys were lined up waiting and it turns out the culprits were brought to a barracks in the town.....Town Hall Street that's where they were brought.....just in case.....just as well.....and the boyoo who shot him was hanged in Crumlin Road Jail on my GEORDIE'S birthday.....2nd of September..... couldn't have picked a better present for my GEORDIE if I'd been given a say in the matter.....don't remember his name but a name I'll always remember is that JOE CAHILL one; he got life in jail, bet that put all the wanting a united Ireland out of his head; oh he was a badin.....one of the worst

they said at the time.....yeah they said that he was the ring leader.....imagine, I can remember CAHILL'S name but not the boy they hanged!

UNA (Indignantly) TOM.....TOM WILLIAMS.....that was his name! That's why we're selling these Easter Lilies.....so no one will forget his name..... or the names of our other brave patriots.....(looks at her watch impatiently)

CLEANER Well my GEORDIE thinks all you fenian women should be given antiception pills and that would put an end to all this nonsense.....no more of you would be born and we could enjoy our wee province without all the hassle you lot put us through.....my GEORDIE knows what he's talkin about all right so he does! (Looking for agreement)

SIGHLE Antiception.....you've lost us.....you mean contraception!

CLEANER This new tablet that the Pope's tellin you all you're not allowed to take because you'll go to hell. It stops you havin babies...(looks for agreement) you know it's called the pill (struggles to spells it) P I L everybody's takin it now.....even big JEAN who's away to get your mate from reception...she thinks it's great.....it changed her life she saidshe tells all the Constables here she takes it, and she tells me off course, she tells me everything 'cause I'm the only other woman workin here; and she even manages to smile now from time to time...(thoughtful) now that she's gettin plenty of overtime, big TREV sees to that!

BOTH GIRLS ARE LOOKING AT THEIR WATCHES AND THEN EACH OTHER

CONTINUES:

You two seem to be in an awful hurry you keep lookin at your watches.....(looks at her own) mines broke, well I'm off soon, do you want that wee cup of tea?

UNA I'd appreciate a glass of water.....if you don't mind Sally

CLEANER Water?

UNA Yes please, I was at Communion this morning.....

CLEANER (Cheeky) And what? What does that mean?

UNA We don't take anything to eat or drink after Communion until we first take 3 sips of water.....

CLEANER Oh I see.....you're supernishous.....

UNA Superstitious.....No nothing like thatit's just we take the water in honour of the Blessed Trinity.....(both girls bless themselves)Father Son and Holy Ghost.

CLEANER (Mops her way out through door) I'm away love that's too farfetched as my GEORDIE would say for me.....all the best now..... hope you've learned your lesson and I won't be seeing you back here before next Easter.....do yourselves a favour get rid of them Easter Lily's!

BOTH (Together) Cheerio SALLY.....

SIGHLE My God! That's sending the shivers down my spine, I never thought about the dates.....this is Easter Sunday 10th April '66 and this time on Easter Sunday 24 years ago TOM WILLIAMS: JOE CAHILL, DIXIE CORDNER, JIMMY PERRY

UNA INTERRUPTS

UNA JOHN OLIVER, PAT SIMPSON, MADGE BURNS AND MARGARET NOLAN (both look at one another) and Constable MURPHY, oh my God.....this is eerie.....

SIGHLE Yeah and on top of that who's unveiling the new Antrim Memorial in Milltown today.....

UNA JOE CAHILL.....and there's to be a grave in it for TOM WILLIAMS when the National Graves finally get his body released from the Crumlin Road.

SIGHLE I'm supposed to be carrying a wreath today; JIMMY STEELE himself asked me.....there's no way we're getting out of here in time for the parade.....I'm sure they all know we've been arrested.....
(change of tone) I think SULLIVAN is one of the main speakers isn't he?

UNA Think so.....might even be JIMMY STEELE himself for the 50th.
(excited) I didn't get to tell you that BRIGID sent me over to Ardoyne yesterday to get more Easter lily's..... Ballymurphy were sold out.....I went

to LARKINS in Butler street and they'd none but Anne*, Geraldine's big sister, brought me down to McGUIGAN'S and MARY was able to spare two boxes.....she brought me upstairs to see the new coat that she got for Easter, she tried it on for me and it and it gorgeous.....it's brown with, you know that sort of twisted poodle wool collar and she'd a lovely wee hat to match.....MARY'S laying the Cumann na mBan executive wreath and BRIGID'S laying the National Graves this year (slight pause) but.....(teasing) you'll never guess who I saw in Ardoyne as I was running for the bus.....go on guess.....go on.....(bites her lip)

SIGHLE (thinking) SEAN MURPHY*.....

UNA (shakes her head) No.....go on guess

SIGHLE SEAN WATSON*.....

UNA No.....just think.....who's the best lookin fella in Turf Lodge? I'll give you a clue.....he's tall dark and handsome and his first name is JOE

SIGHLE Oh my God.....JOE MC CANN* what was he doin over in Ardoyne.....?

UNA I just couldn't believe my luck.....maybe I'll get a ceili dance from him in the Felons tonight.....if we get out that is.....well I can always dream; I dreamt about him last night (deep sigh then pause)

SIGHLE Did you hear that girl last Sunday night in the Felons singin Black and Tan Gun? She was great, wish I have a voice that that! She sang it better than the record.

(SONG IS SUNG IN BACK GROUND)

It was down in the town of old Bantry where most of the fighting was done, it was there that a young Irish soldier was shot by a black and tan gun.

MORE.....

GIRLS SWING THEIR LEGS AND LOOK OVER AUDIENCE

CONTINUE:

I'm definitely goin to buy it with my wages next week; it's in the top 20 down South, it was being played everywhere in Dublin the other week when we went down to collect the Easter Lily's.....they didn't give us enough pins with them.... Anyway... What are we goin to do about our Easter Lily's.....? (Thoughtful) I'm not removing mine.....

UNA Nor am I.....!

SIGHLE Wait till big JEAN the RUC queen comes back and we'll see what happens then, but I don't think we should speak to her at all if she asks us anything.....

UNA Okay..... but do you think we'll get charged with sellin the Easter Lily's? Will we be brought to court?.....flip.....if my name's in the paper I'll get the sack.....they're all in the Orange Order or pipe bands where I work; I only got the job because they thought I was one of them because I signed my name in English, I knew if I signed UNA I wouldn't even have got an interview.....

SIGHLE How was that? What school did you go to?

UNA See my last 3 years at school were in England because I was sent over to my granny's in Manchester after mammy died.....they couldn't tell from the school's name what I was.....in work they call me AGNES.....and I've got away with it because I live in Finaghy not too far from the Orange Field; it hasn't dawned on them that I live on the Andersonstown side.....(they both laugh) Here (tipping MAIRE'S arm) I wonder who the other girl is out there?

SIGHLE Could be anybody.....SHEILA MAGILL from Turf Lodge she was sellin them up at the Barn.....maybe even her mammy SADIE.....I was with SADIE last Easter selling them outside the Barn..... they've still no Chapel of their own and no sign of one either.....I'm sure they're all freezing at mass in the winter.....I mean it's in a barn up the mountain!

UNA I was at a concert in the barn last month it was to help get the money for the new chapel....the Legion of Mary run it.....but there wasn't a big turn-out.....it'll take years to get enough money at that rate.....the Vatican should be helping....they've plenty of money.....when you think of all the (stops suddenly)

SHOUTS AND SCREAMS ARE HEARD FROM RECEPTION: BOTH GIRLS LOOK AT ONE ANOTHER FRIGHTENED:

LIGHTS OUT

END OF PART ONE

*Anne Larkin was arrested for selling Easter lilies the following Easter 1967

*Sean Murphy, Sean Watson and Joe McCann and two others were arrested and charged with IRA membership in November 1965

ACT 2

SCENE 3

SHOUTING AND BANGING OF DOOR CONTINUES:

FROM BEHIND DOOR

CLEANER Look love I'm only the cleaner here it's no use complainin to me I can do nothin about them beatin you..... they weren't from here they're from Musgrave street barracks.....it's not my fault and anyway you shouldn't be wearin that badge this is Ulster love not Dublin.....

ROSIE Oh shut up you stupid auld doll.....was I askin you to do anything.....?

CLEANER No and a good job cause I wouldn't be doin it for you anyway!

DOOR PUSHES OPEN AND ROSIE FALLS IN FOLLOWED

BY RUC WOMAN WHOES HAIR IS DISHEAVELED. BOTH GIRLS JUMP UP TO HELP ROSIE

RUC (Angry and shaking her finger at ROSIE) I'll be right back you little tiger Lily.....

BOTH GIRLS HUG AND TAKE ROSIE'S HANDS TO COMFORT HER

UNA What happened you? Were you caught sellin Easter Lily's too? We're waitin to be interrogated and charged.....special branch will soon be here.....I'm UNA, they arrested me outside St Teresa's Chapel.....

SIGHLE And I'm SIGHLE.....from Beechmount..... They grabbed me outside St Mary's in Chapel Lane.....

ROSIE (Takes Easter Lily from inside her knee sock) I wasn't sellin them, me and my da were wearing them, we were rushin over to the Falls after eleven O' clock mass for the parade and as we were passin Musgrave barracks the peelers jumped us.....they recognised my da and started pushin him tryin to get him inside the barracks and I was tryin to get them off him.....I saw blood all over his shirt and I just went mad.....my poor daddy.....then that big drip out there on the desk told me to take my Lily off and I told him where to go and he went to grab it from my jacket and I belted him one accidently didn't even hurt him but I managed to take the

Lily and put it down my sock when all the confusion was happening.....I think your woman the CLEANER saw me but she didn't let on or maybe she didn't realise what I was doin.....

SIGHLE Oh don't worry about her she's only interested in her GOERDIE and her dinner in the oven (laughs).

ROSIE I'll probably get charged with assault now.....there's no way I was goin to let him take it from me.....(slight pause and looks directly into both girls eyes) I know my history.....(Stands up and stares at right end of ceiling as though she sees a vision of Tricolour, both girls also stare as in a trance at same spot) This time 50 years ago men were being executed because they refused to wear the badge of the slave pinned on their fellow country-men by the British who came and crucified the Irish people; (points to right hand side of ceiling) our flag was raised above the GPO and those men died to keep it there.....flyin free like their spirits with fire in them.....unstoppable that's what they were; unstoppable to the end! (she walks backwards to her seat still looking at ceiling, sits down then all three come out of trance)

UNA Hope your da's alright. You definitely can talk and you know your history.....what age are you?

ROSIE Fifteen.....I'm from the Short Strand.....if we didn't fight back we'd all be dead over there.....I don't know how many times we had our windows broke and comin up to the 12th my da sits up every night and has buckets of water just waitin for a petrol bomb through the window.....he says it's only a matter of time now before someone's killed.....the tension over our way is really bad since Gerry Fitt was elected last month and they all went wild shoutin over at us every night and then Nelson's Pillar gettin blown up in Dublin made it worse (laughs) they were shoutin louder and louder than ever.....and we were laughin louder and louder back at them.....have you heard the song out about it yet?

UP WENT NELSON BY GO LUCKY FOUR IS PLAYED IN BACKGROUND: FINISHES.

UNA Who's it by?

ROSIE The Go Lucky Four, my da bought it in you know McBURNEY'S round in Smithfield.....I think it's called something like the Premier Records. It's really good, my da was singin it last night down stairs when we were all stairs in bed.....(laughs) it was a laugh we all snuck out of bed and began singin it from the top of the stairs and he didn't even threaten to come up to us if we didn't shut up and go to sleep, like he usually does if we begin carrying on. He stays up late on a Saturday night polishing all the shoes and puttin the washed socks over the fire guard so they'll be dry for mass on Sunday mornin.....but we all got new socks for Easter (stretches leg out to show sock) I love mine they're all the go now with the mini-skirts.....I got a lovely wee pink hat to go with my jacket but the auld peeler knocked it of when I was helpin my da.....it'll probably end up in court givin as evidence against me (all laugh)

SIGHLE How do you live over in the Short Strand and The Markets? I just couldn't.....you're surrounded completely...one way in and one way out.....Really, how do you manage? Now your man PAISLEY is makin all sorts of threats and protests what are you all goin to do?

ROSIE In a way we're used to it.....it's like bein curfew' we've all grown up with this kind of imprisonment.....we are careful especially at night if we're out late across town or if we go to the pictures we have to watch gettin off the bus.....wee boys are always gettin beat up if they venture up the Newtownards Road on a Saturday evening and if there's an Orange march we just stay either in the house or if we're playin in the street we make sure to be near an open door in case they'd start throwin thing over the roof tops.

SIGHLE How come the peelers know your da? Has he been in jail? Was he a 40's man?

ROSIE Yes he was. Our family are all republican.....both my da and my ma's families.....sure someone related to us was in the house where SEAN MARTIN was killed in Andersons Street....April 1940 it was.....26 years ago last month.....as far as I know Easter was early that year near the end of March. (in a secretive whisper) I'm not sayin who it was told my da what actually happened but this is what my da told us; he said the relation who told him was still wearin his Easter Lily on the inside of his lapel (smiles) just a wee personal thing he always did; (waits for reaction from

girls) maybe as a constant act of defiance, my da thought, (talks like an old fashioned child telling a story) against the cold bitterness of the Orange sectarianism that surrounds the nationalist people in the Short Strand and the Markets area. (Pause) Anyway when he walked into that house in Andersons Street, he said to my da that little did he realised then (slight pause) but that Easter Lily and what it symbolised for him would shortly and forevermore become a living memory of true heroism that he was about to witness first hand.....now (nods head) when Easter's over he takes it off and puts it away till the next Easter. (Both girls are listening to every word as she gets closer to them) What happened was.....SEAN MARTIN was givin a lecture on how to throw a hand-grenade.....he thought the detonator was a dud and when he pulled out the pin it started to hiss..... he shouted for the others to get out of the house and realising there wasn't enough time he threw himself on top of the grenade... on the kitchen table.... and it exploded killin him.....apparently he saw kids playin outside and that was why he didn't throw it out the window.....(in a sad tone) how can you not wear your Easter Lily with pride when your wearin it to honour and remember people like SEAN MARTIN.....! DOOR BURSTS OPEN ENTERS RUC WOMAN WITH BOOK IN HAND

RUC Right, SHIELA BREEN you first.....by the way one notices that you haven't yet learned to spell your name right, right! That says a lot about the Catholic maintained school system that your lot keep insisting on; it might be a bit late but SHIELA is spelt (spells out) S H I E L A and not (spells out) S I G H L E (laughs) remove that Easter Lily from your jacket and place it in this bin for rubbish and you can go on home but if you don't you'll be charged with wearing an illegal emblem likely to cause a disturbance. What's wrong can you not even give me an answer?

THREE GIRLS LOOK AWAY FROM RUC WOMAN

I repeat.....(glaring into SIGHLE'S face) Remove it.....(shouts) NOW!

SIGHLE (Jumps up to hit RUC woman but is pulled down by UNA) I wasn't goin to answer you but I feel I must.....(stands up) not for myself alone but for all our patriots whom we honour this day.....it is my duty to answer you.... you who cannot even bear to acknowlege my proper

name.....My name is spelt SIGHLE not SHIELA.....you can check my registration certificate and my birth certificate as well.....My name is SIGHLE and I was honoured to be called after one of the greatest and bravest Irish women from the 1916 rebellion. SIGHLE HUMPHREYS and in fact she herself is credited rightly or wrongly with designing this badge of honour that I wear proudly and refuse to remove for you.....or your masters.....So.....there you have it.....(Sits down, folds her arms and crosses her legs) That's my answer! My only answer!

RUC I was warned about you.....I've a feeling that this place will be seeing a lot more of you in years to come! Now (slightly subdued)AGNES.....I have to say the following to you also.....I've been instructed and I take my instructions seriously.....quite seriously in fact.....AGNES THORNTON.....

UNA That's not my name, my name is UNA.....

RUC Well in Linfield Industrial Estate where you work, that's in Sandy Row...right AGNES? I believe, well they all seem to think your name is AGNES and I believe you do also, otherwise wouldn't answer to it when you're in work, now would you.....I'm told you do.....so you see AGNES we know a lot of things about you.....so perhaps if you're charged and brought to court and your name.....your proper name, is in the newspaper you'll maybe find it hard to go back to work.....get the picture.... AGNES?

UNA My name is UNA.....and to be true to myself and those I honour by wearing this Easter Lily I cannot pretend to be other than who I am.....the price of wearing this Easter Lily may cost me my job but not my dignity! I am an Irish Republican and proud to be able to honour our patriot dead in this small way because they all died without counting the cost for themselves or for their families! (Folds her arms) So there you are.....my answer. Now do with me what you will.....I'm not afraid of any of you!

RUC Look, you are all young girls you shouldn't be talking or even thinking like that.....you should all be out enjoying yourselves not defending your misguided principles in a prison cell.....for this is what this room is.....a prison cell.....if you believe that those Easter Lily's you're

protecting symbolise something worth giving up your freedom for....(slowly) then.... there is nothing I can do to take them from you.....sure, I mean I can physically take them and destroy them but.....that place where you seem to hold them..... in your hearts....I can't touch them there.....can I? God help you all!

ROSIE HESITATES AT FIRST THEN GET UP AND STEPS FORWARD TO SPEAK

ROSIE (To RUC) Some people think that everything and everyone has a price but somethings and some people don't have a price.....you can't put a price on what this badge, this Easter Lily stands for.....some people have paid for it with their blood.....others their freedom.....and startin out this mornin none of us knew what the Easter Lily was goin to cost us. We didn't know then and we still don't know the price of an Easter Lily.....'cause no man or woman or young person can know the price of anything unless they know what it's worth is to them and them alone..... it is a private matter of conscience and also of the heart!

UNA AND SIGHLE TAKE ROSIE'S HANDS IN THEIRS AS SHE SITS DOWN

RUC Right.....get out.....go home.....the three of you. (shouts) NOW!

GIRLS LOOK AT ONE ANOTHER AND RUC THEY STALL FOR A MOMENT BEFORE QUICKLY EXITING: ENTERS CLEANER

CLEANER Well what happened there.....you chased them wee girls and they're runnin like hell down the road.....

RUC (Without looking at CLEANER) I think I might consider a career move.....those three girls give me the shivers.....I reckon that all three would pay with their lives for those stupid Lily's.....I came in to tell them that they could all go.... but I just needed to prove to myself that I could get them to hand those Easter Lily's over without a fight, but it looks like it would take more than threats to make them hand them over..... (pause and sombre tone) O'NEILL is a weak leader he won't last much longer.....he told us to go easy this Easter.....let them have their day he ordered.....we'll see what the rest of the 60's bringEaster Lily's

today.....what will it be tomorrow? I think we'll be seeing those girls back here before too long!

CLEANER (looking around room) Well, I'm away home to tell my GEORDIE about all this and to see what he makes of it all.....and then I'll put my feet up and enjoy.....(smiling) Alf Garnet!

RUC Those girls are away to listen to Jimmy Steel and you're away to listen to Alf Garnet.....(as she exits door looks back and says) and I can't be sure this Easter Sunday 1966 between the two, which of the two, IS the most dangerous!

CLEANER I've a bad forebodin about all Easter Sundays now.....(to audience) can history really repeat itself; does it keep happenin until somebody gets it right? When I get home I'm goin to lock my door! Right now, where's that auld bucket of mine?

END

LIGHT SLOWLY OUT

I wrote 'The Clarkes:1916' because I always had a great admiration for them and in particular Tom because of the time he spent in prison enduring terrible cruelty. Other prisoners went insane because of the treatment all Irish Fenian prisoners received from their English jailers. Kathleen was a woman who also endured much because of her politics. She defiantly, at times, stood alone and could not compromise her principles no matter what the cost. Eventually the price of personal and political integrity was high and so she left Ireland and lived with her son in Liverpool from 1965 until her death.

THE CLARKE'S: 1916

CAST:

Kathleen Clarke (present)

Kathleen Clarke (younger: will be called YOUNG for clarity)

Tom Clarke

Sean Mac Diarmada

Bulmer Hobson

Eoin Mac Neill

Patrick Pearse

Two paper girls (Eva & Hannah)

Boy in Shop (Oliver)

Group of 6 children sitting around entrance to shop playing games, singing and begging

Voice overs/Recordings attached.

DRAMA BEGINS IN LIGHTS OUT. ORO SÉ DO BHEATHA 'BHAILE IS PLAYED LOUDLY THEN LOWERED AS A VOICE OVER OF AN EXCERPT FROM DORA SIGERSON SHORTER'S PIECE CALLED 'THE TRICOLOUR' WHICH APPEARED IN THE IRISH PRESS IN 1956 AND LATER IN 1966 WAS PRINTED IN BOOKLET FORM TO COMMEMORATE THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RISING. SONG FINISHES AS V/O ENDS, THEN LIGHTS UP SLOWLY.

V/O About this time there was let loose a great tumult in the city. Fire and battle held Dublin for about a week, and then from out of it all, above the crash of falling houses and the roar of guns, over the crackling flames rose the tricolour, and for a few mad days it shone into the hearts of the people. And then a wounded prisoner of war, by the name of James Connolly, was slain, and so was disbanded the wonderful Citizen Army which had arisen from the awful conditions of bad housing and miserable wages so prevalent in Ireland. So Labour was shot down because it dared to be discontented with its fortunes. At the same time Pearse, the idealist, surrendered to superior forces to save his countrymen. And Idealism was shot down because it dared to dream greater dreams than were allowed to small nationalities. On Easter Monday Sheehy-Skeffington, the pacifist, was murdered secretly and without trial. Thus Peace was shot down by a lunatic, because it got in the way of militarism. So the bright flag fell from the high place where it had floated free. Yet what a tricolour were these three – Labour, Idealism, and Pacifism – how proudly it flew, so distinct in its colours, so perfect in its union, preaching its lesson for Easter to the people! At Easter, the time of Resurrection, not of Death. Yet out of Death comes Resurrection. Who will take it upon himself to crucify Labour since Christ was the son of a carpenter: Idealism, for Christ was an idealist, Peace, for did not Christ Our Lord say: "Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called the children of God"?

GROUP OF RAGGED CHILDREN ARE PLAYING GAMES AND SINGING ON STREET IN FRONT OF SHOP NOT ON STAGE BUT ON FLOOR.

LOCATION: TOBACCONIST SHOP OWNED BY CLARKES 1916. TIME: PRESENT 1966

DRESSED IN BLACK COAT AND HAT KATHLEEN (PRESENT) WALKS INTO SHOP AS IT WAS IN 1916. SHE WALKS BEHIND COUNTER SOAKING IN THE MEMORIES. TOM IS ALREADY SEATED BEHIND COUNTER WRITING AND REMAINS ON STAGE THOUGHTOUT. THERE IS ALSO A CHAIR IN FRONT OF COUNTER WHICH IS USED BY TOM AT DIFFERENT STAGES THOUGHTOUT PLAY.

KATHLEEN (Taking in deep breaths and looking all around) I can smell the tobacco from you here Tom Clarke, for you brought it with you every night to our bed eventually when everyone else had gone home to their own separate lives; to their own manner of sleeping and waking and waiting, waiting for Ireland to be freed! (deep sigh) After they killed you Tom..... eventually..... I had to wash the sheets but it was still there.....that smell of tobacco and matches, of newspaper, stale air, it was something no amount of trying could ever wash away.....even with new sheets..... and then down in Limerick in bed I felt and smelt you close and sometimes so close I could rest my hand on the pillow where your poor cold and tired head that I would imagine, lay.....waiting for me to touch and comfort you and revive that beautiful spirit of yours.....(calling out) Tom.....(whispers) my Tom.

TAKES OFF HAT AND SETS IT ON COUNTER THEN OPENS HER HAND TO EXAMINE HIS MEDAL

CONTINUES:

Fifty years.....what does fifty years mean to us? It means no more nor no less than it did when you were stood there (points to end of counter) when I was young and in love with you and you were old..... though not to me Tom.....no you were never that to me..... except when we first met and then only for a short time had I thought you.....old. They took all that was young in you Tom.....they aged your poor body.....but they could never for a single second find to take from you that beautiful mind that became the embodiment of the spirit of the Thomas Clarke whom I knew

and fell head over heels in love with to your death and thereafter.....
remember Tom.....I'd bring you your mug of tea when the shop was quiet.
LIGHT OUT ON KATHLEEN. LIGHT ON TOM. AT END OF COUNTER A
YOUNG KATHLEEN APPEARS WITH MUG OF TEA AND HANDS IT TO
TOM AS HE WRITES.

TOM Not a moment too soon dear.....(pointing upwards) they've settled
down at last?

YOUNG K (Smiling speaks lyrically) All asleep and fed and happy!

TOM As it should be dear! (They both laugh)

YOUNG K I thought you finished editing that this morning.

TOM I thought so to dear but after talking to Sean I've decided to make a
few alterations.....he is greatly taken with Pearse and has
recommended that it should be he who does the oration in Bodinstown and
I can't disagree because I've never heard him speak.....but a strange
combination of a fellow is this Pearse, such unlikely material for a
rebel.....but if he's impressed Sean that's good enough for me for now!
(Goes on writing as he speaks) While they entertain the King of England up
at Phoenix Park with rich food and drink that (thoughtful) that lasts but a
moment and is soon forgotten, we will be entertained at the graveside of
Wolfe Tone, by one Patrick Pearse, and he'll feed us.....

YOUNGK (excitedly) With what dear, with what?

TOM With such rich words that will nourish and inspire our patriotic spirit
that hungers for encouragement..... that's the food of our forefathers who
were fed by men like Tone and Emmet and Russell and will last and fill us as
though they are speaking to us from graves that we visit to unite our
determination to fight, least we give in to our enemy and be slaves to them
forever. (Throws pen down change of tone) And..... I have a surprise for
you my dear dear Kathleen (gets up and takes Kathleen's hand to dance)
The shop is doing well so I think we can rent that house you have your eye
on in St Patrick's Road.....now, can I have that last dance with you to
the sweet music of our soul.....?(whispers) my Anam Cara.....

THEY BOTH STEP OUT IN FRONT OF COUNTER AND WALZ TO
INSTRUMENTAL OF I'LL TAKE YOU HOME AGAIN KATHLEEN:
AFTERWARDS BACK TO PRESENT. LIGHT OUT.

LIGHT ON KATHLEEN

KATHLEEN We were so happy Tom.....were we not?.....to think that we might have missed each other on our life journey is so painful....when I saw you that first time, in Limerick with uncle John, I thought 'surely this can't be the hero that uncle John talked about' I thought you so old and uninteresting.....my heart fell almost to my feet.....I had such great expectations of this brave patriot who could not be broken by the enemy and beforehand I had thought in my girlish manner that your looks should match your bravery and I was disappointed that that was not the case.....but then, after a few days, when I started to listen to you, then I began to watch you and then I could not take my eyes of you.....I wanted to know and understand everything about you....I saw your magnificence and I knew I could not do without you as mine.....you understood when no one understood, I had dreams.....but better than any dream I had you.....Tom Clarke!

SHE TAKES HER COAT OF AND FOLDS IT OVER COUNTER
CONTINUES:

And Seán to, we were a family, you and I his adopted father and mother. A son to be proud of.

SHOP DOOR BELL RINGS AS SEÁN MacDIARMADA ENTERS TOM
LOOKS UP

SEÁN You'll never guess.....not in a million years what he's just gone and done!

TOM Who.....(look of shock on his face) don't tell me Hobson's gone and done what we ordered him not to do under any circumstances.....

SEÁN I sat with my mouth wide open Tom, I just couldn't believe it; he went back to see Casement in Boswell's hotel the day after we were there with him..... and Casement still sick in bed, he must have put doubt in his mind about voting with us, Casement knew only too well that if we agreed to let the 25 of Redmond's men on our council we'd be outnumbered.....

and then he's went round to MacNeill's house.....he persuaded MacNeill and then they both went back round to Casement and persuaded him and then they sent for Moore and got him on their side as well..... this is treachery nothing short and we may deal with it.....!

TOM The man is a fool a complete and utter fool he's given a man like Redmond a decisive influence in the IRB and I am not standing for that for one second. You and I have worked too hard but so has Hobson for that matter so why, why now at this crucial time in our history is he letting the power crazed Redmond take us on a different course; he's desperate to keep his Home Rule on the agenda but we know better it's never going to happen and Home Rule is not what the Irish nation needs; what we need is independence not masters! I could understand this if Hobson didn't know exactly what's at stake here.....but the fact is he does know..... what's he thinking off..... dammed fool!

LIGHTS FADE FROM TOM AND SEÁN AND BACK ON KATHLEEN (SEÁN EXITS DOOR, DOOR BELL RINGS AS HE EXITS)

KATHLEEN I was sad at first about that because it meant...(thoughtful) Tom dear, that you had lost a trusted friend, a friend you came to love and respect.....(change of tone) but still, Seán never failed you nor did he ever fail me, no.... not even once. Do you remember the day he came to stay after the polio? (Deep breath) Good God, he came to us and we were so glad.....seems like yesterday Tom doesn't it? He soldiered on with that dreadful limp.....how he must have suffered but it didn't deter him one bit, no, Seán carried on like the true Irish Soldier he was.....I ask myself many many times since.....

since 1916 what would have become of that Easter week if we had not had men like Seán and the others.....they too had the vision, the dream and the energy to make it a reality.....Bulmer for one, even though you felt betrayed by him to Redmond.....but looking back he too worked tirelessly.... even before Seán and off course well before Pearse..... (thoughtful in whispering tone) Pearse..... what would it have all been like without him? Without his beautiful words.....his words took the sting and the pain out of the ugliness that fighting one's enemy does to a man and woman.....(thoughtful) a child even a child for they too played their part.....and many of them we knew from here.....

DOOR BELL RINGS AND TWO LITTLE RAGGED GIRLS WALK IN
HOLDING HANDS.

EVA (At counter to Tom) Mr Clarke our wee Jo'sep can't do the paper round today and my mam says to tell you why (puts her hand over the side of her face as though she doesn't want anyone else to hear)

TOM Go on Eva, tell me what's wrong with your Joseph.

EVA (Looking around before she answers quickly and scratching her head) Well Mr Clarke, he's got the scabbies.....and my mam says it was ok when they were on his body cause no one could see them but now they're all over his face and hands and his wee legs, my mam says it was a pity of them wee legs cause they couldn't carry him too far on the paper round but we needed the money and still do Mr Clarke so me and our Hannah will do the round for you and Hannah's not afraid of the dogs and I am so I'm too afraid to do the round on my own.....(pauses for breath) is that ok Mr Clarke? And our Hannah has a wee present for you from our Jo'sep.....(Hannah puts an apple on counter)

HANNAH Can I get a bite please.....Mr Clarke, my mam says I'm allowed too if you allow me.

LIGHTS OUT AND BACK ON KATHLEEN

KATHLEEN Me thinks Tom, that had you not gone to America in the first place and I following you and then returning home again when we did and had you not the tenacity when Rossa died to request that he be brought here to Dublin rather than Skibbereen or Rosscarberry then it all may not have happened.....at least, that Easter 1916, anyway! All the different factors came together and I'm sure Pearse would have believed that God himself had a hand in it all. You never spoke about the daily torture you endured for those 15 years Tom, I only realised when Jeremiah O' Donovan Rossa (an aside) I sometimes like to say his name in full because to this day I'm still in awe of this powerful man.....but when I heard him speak unafraid about it.....remember.....and I can only speak to you now about it because it can't hurt you any more my darling Tom. But remembering his words make me realise more why England is our

enemy.....no country treats friends the way they have treated
us.....

LIGHTS DIM AS VOICE OVER OF O'DONOVAN ROSSA IS PLAYED THEN
OUT

V/O I went into prison determined to bear all things patiently, determined to obey everything, as I conceived that the dignity of the cause of liberty required that men should suffer calmly and strongly for it; but the more obedient and humble I was, the more my masters showed a disposition to trample upon me – the more they felt disposed to give us that annoyance which had no other object but to torment us. I was not long in Pentonville Prison when hunger had brought me to view things in such a philosophical manner, that, if when eating my eight ounces of bread I found a beetle or a ciarogue cracking between my teeth, instead of spitting out in disgust what I was chewing, I would chew away with the instinctive knowledge that nature had provided for the carrying away of anything that was foul and the retaining of what was nutritious from what I swallowed. So much had the feeling of hunger taken possession of me that, day by day, I found myself regretting that I had not eaten more of the good things of the world when I was in society..... Tis not to be wondered at when it is understood that starvation was part of my punishment and that I had experienced the sobering influences of bread and water for a period of five hundred and sixty days during the first three or four years of my imprisonment.....I had all along a secret feeling of defiance that sustained me when they ill-treated me. It did not show itself on the surface, for I was habitually polite except on two or three occasions that their outrages got the better of me; then the spirit broke out and pitched them and their rules and regulations to the devil. I had a feeling that I would succumb to the ordeal in the long run, and I took a resolution that I would make my death as dear to them as possible.....

LIGHTS ON KATHLEEN

KATHLEEN And when he told how he knelt on the ground to lap his food from a dogs dish on the floor his hands shackled round his back I knew this had also happened you Tom so I could never question you on the matter.....how could I? (Pause then change of tone) Remember that first day when Seán brought Pearse into this very shop to meet with you.....remember that? It was the first time I wore that red cardigan

and you had just told me how I suited it and that I should wear more red in future.....remember.....

YOUNG KATHLEEN IS STANDING BEHIND TOM WITH HER ARMS AROUND HIM LOOKING OVER HIS SHOULDER AS SHOP BELL RINGS ENTER SEÁN WITH PEARSE DOOR BELL RINGS

SEÁN Patrick this is he, the man himself, Tom Clarke.....and his lovely wife Kathleen. (Pearse and Tom shake hands but he doesn't acknowledge Kathleen though she put her hand out for him to shake) Patrick has agreed to do the Emmet speech and I've told him the context of what he's to say but he'd already figured that out himself and in fact he's already written it in full and wants you to approve it.....

KATHLEEN (YOUNG) EXITS: SCENE CONTINUES WITH 3 IN CONVERSATION WHICH AUDIENCE CAN'T HEAR. AFTER A FEW MOMENTS PEARSE EXITS ALONE. YOUNG KATHLEEN RETURNS WITH 2 MUGS OF TEA

SEAN Mrs Clarke, you should have heard him, if he's impressed your husband then he must be good. (Looking at Tom) You tell her Mr Clarke what he was like.....I'm speechless, I can't put it into words.....

TOM (Thoughtfully) Standing here in this year of 1911..... as he said the lines "Dublin would have to do some great act to atone for the shame of not producing a man to dash his head against a stone wall in an effort to rescue Robert Emmet....." I realise that this is truly a man who will be able to persuade other men to follow our cause and to do for Ireland what is necessary.....(looking at both) Kathleen, Seán, things are beginning to take shape.....for the first time I can see all our endeavours coming together, finally we have most of the ingredients we need and now all we require are the weapons! (Pause) Pearse will be a fisher of men, mark my words.

LIGHTS OUT ON TOM SCENE, BACK ON KATHLEEN

KATHLEEN You know Tom that Pearse was one of the few men that I could not communicate with, he was too shy for me to link (shrugs shoulders) or connect with.....with the others I never held back, I could discuss

anything with them, but with Pearse.....his shyness frightened me off.....it smitted me and was contagious, but perhaps it was a female thing for I never observed it smiting any man.....but still..... I admired him then and more so after the executions (slight pause) for his life and yours ended at the same moment.....my love.....you both shared so many moments along with Mac Donagh that history hails and elevates..... and yet that, one all important moment, that most intimate of moments, you three shared, was only seen by your executioners, and they, such as the people and race they come from, could never in a life time recognise its importance or significance and that moment though lost still found its way into the hearts of our beloved people. (Pause and change of tone) Finally though, I began to know and perhaps understand Pearse a little, through his mother.....(smiling and looking far away) I'll never forget that night in the Ceili.....Cumann na mBan organised it for funds and we got to sit together.... for once.....(turns towards audience) there he stood in uniform and the audience held their breath so not to disturb him and to hear every single word that danced forth like a raging gale from his mouth.....remember? Even the sheet of paper in his hand, he held it so eloquently, and he hardly looked down to read from it. The poem was called The Rebel, I imagined he had just finished writing it and was anxious to share it..... and through the years I've heard many recite it but non like Pearse himself that night! And the next day.....Do you remember...?

LIGHTS OUT ON KATHLEEN AND LIGHTS ON TOM. YOUNG KATHLEEN WALKS OUT WITH A MUG OF TEA AND HANDS IT TO TOM FROM BEHIND AND AS SHE EXITS TOM SAYS AS SHE WAITS AT DOOR TO HEAR

TOM That door (points with finger at door) hasn't stopped with young men calling and wanting to join up and young women and wee boys and girls as well.....

DOOR BELL RINGS AND YOUNG BOY IN BARE FEET ENTERS WITH DARK SKINNED FEMALE CHILD BY THE HAND: YOUNG KATHLEEN EXITS

OLIVER Hello Mr Clarke, I want to fight and die for Ireland!

TOM (Smiling) And who are you and why do you want to die for Ireland, tell me? At your age son you should be wanting to live for Ireland and to aspire to help make Ireland the greatest Nation among all Nations: Irish, Gaelic and Free. Can you help make her that.....?

OLIVER I can sir, Mr Clarke.

TOM (Softly) Your name?

OLIVER Oliver, Mr Clarke, it's a shameful name but one I'm stuck with!

TOM How so son?

OLIVER Me father died at sea before I was born and me mam ended up in a poor house in Drogheda where the warden was English and harsh, according to witnesses the story goes that because she gave birth to me on April 25th the English warden insisted that I be named after Oliver Cromwell who was born on that date more than 300 years earlier and they say he murdered more than 3000 people in Drogheda where I was born.....anyway me mam cried and cried but no matter she was the homeless one and poor and hungry as well; she wanted to name me after me da.....and then she died and I being an orphan had no one but the warden and his wicket wife and she told me my mam left the message for me never to change me name and that's how it is till this very day Mr Clarke. Maybe when Irelands free I can change me name.....I like your name Mr Clarke, I like the name Tom!

TOM I like the name Oliver, in Ireland there are many Olivers and some lost their lives because they refused to lie down and be conquered. Come back later son and we'll talk and get you a good dinner.....mean while take this apple for the child and tell me what connection she is to you?

OLIVER We have no connection Mr Clarke sir, she belongs to the auld one from the fruit cart across there in Moore street; she grabbed me by the ear this morning and said if I minded her she'd pay me with some damaged fruit later and I haven't ate since early yesterday so I naturally agreed!

TOM And what's the child's name Oliver?

OLIVER (Says as if he's telling a true story but making it up as he goes along) I'd be a goodin if I knew that..... she hasn't spoken a word from the auld one handed her to me.....but, (in a sort of whisper so the child won't hear) I heard it said she was born in America to the auld one's

sister's daughter; it could be something like this Mr Clarke: the auld one's sister sailed to America on one of the coffin ships in the late 1840's and gave birth on reaching dry land and then fell into bad company and likewise the baby daughter.....when she came of an age, that is, I would imagine.....and then giving birth she died, the child's mother, I mean, just like my own mother and so the baby was shipped back to where she was wanted and I think that's as good an explanation as you may expect to get Mr Clarke!

TOM I expect it is Oliver.

A CHILD RUNS TO DOOR FROM STREET AND SHOUTS:

CHILD Mr Clarke, Mr Clarke, the peelers have arrested a boy up the street for giving out your papers! (Childs returns to where she came from)

TOM GETS UP AND WALKS TO DOOR TO SHOW THEM OUT. DOOR BELL RINGS.

LIGHTS OUT ON TOM AND BACK ON KATHLEEN

KATHLEEN He came back as he promised and I sent him round to Markievicz and she was happy to help him and later that week I watched him with the others drill and wearing the Fianna Eireann uniform proudly that she had given him.....and he looked happy.....though I never set eyes on him from that day.

LIGHTS OUT THEN BACK ON TOM

TOM The young children queuing up and wanting to do something for their country should be admired but needs also to be addressed. We neither want to use children nor dampen their spirits but it seems they have no fear in them Kathleen...maybe we'll leave that to Connolly, he means to educate them so they'll belong to a future that can change things with their brain before it reaches the stage where the only thing they'll have to change things with, is force! He's a good man.....Connolly, though at times a loose cannon; but Kathleen, we must look out for the children, all children must be cherished, all the children of Ireland, for if we don't cherish them ourselves then who will? They'll be left to the mercy of the corrupt who would have them believe that they are British and that the British are only here to help Ireland and to educate us. It has to be enshrined in our constitution, when we write it ourselves; Connolly definitely has got it right there, so too has

Pearse. Word about the poem Pearse read last night has spread like wild fire.....

YOUNGK Yes, and at least we sat together last night for a change and you actually held my hand in public.....I felt so proud Tom, so proud.

YOUNG KATHLEEN PULLS A CHAIR OVER TO TOM AND THEY SIT TOGETHER HOLDING HANDS AS PEARSE STEPS FORWARD TO READ THE REBEL

PEARSE (Reading from page) I am come of the seed of the people, the people that sorrow, that have no treasure but hope, No riches laid up but a memory of an Ancient glory. My mother bore me in bondage, in bondage my mother was born, I am of the blood of serfs; the children with whom I have played, the men and women with whom I have eaten, have had masters over them, have been under the lash of masters, and, though gentle, have served churls;

the hands that have touched mine, the dear hands whose touch is familiar to me, have worn shameful manacles, have been bitten at the wrist by manacles, have grown hard with the manacles and the task-work of strangers, I am flesh of the flesh of these lowly, I am bone of their bone, I that have never submitted;

I that have a soul greater than the souls of my people's masters, I that have vision and prophecy and the gift of fiery speech,

I that have spoken with God on the top of His holy hill.

And because I am of the people, I understand the people,

I am sorrowful with their sorrow, I am hungry with their desire:

My heart has been heavy with the grief of mothers, my eyes have been wet with the tears of children, I have yearned with old wistful men, and laughed or cursed with young men; their shame is my shame, and I have reddened for it, reddened for that they have served, they who should be free, reddened for that they have gone in want, while others have been full, reddened for that they have walked in fear of lawyers and of their jailors with their writs of summons and their handcuffs, men mean and cruel! I could have borne stripes on my body rather than this shame of my people. and now I speak, being full of vision; I speak to my people, and I speak in my people's name to the masters of my people. I say to my people that they are holy, that they are august, despite their chains, that they are greater than

those that hold them, and stronger and purer, that they have but need of courage, and to call on the name of their God, God the unforgetting, the dear God that loves the peoples for whom He died naked, suffering shame. And I say to my people's masters: Beware, beware of the thing that is coming, beware of the risen people, who shall take what ye would not give. Did ye think to conquer the people or that Law is stronger than life and than men's desire to be free? We will try it out with you, ye that have harried and held, ye that have bullied and bribed, tyrants, hypocrites..... liars!

PEARSE EXITS AS LIGHTS OF TOM THEN BACK ON KATHLEEN

KATHLEEN Was it all a dream Tom, all the great people we knew.....How many great people can any one person know in their life time? (Whispers) They were all great.....greatness came together here in this shop. I sometimes close my eyes and ponder and ask myself (change of tone and says slowly) was this all a dream! Answer me Tom please answer me.....Sometimes at night when I'm alone I imagine you're sitting with me by the fire, you in the left armchair and I on the right with my back to the door, and the three boys are away and we'd sit and drink tea and talk, talk about here, the rising, all what happened and if we could have changed anything in our lives..... and I'd ask what would it have been (pause) and you always say the same thing.....(in a whisper) nothing, not one single thing. And Tom, I love you now as I loved you then.....sometimes it does seem like it was all a dream.....

LIGHTS OUT ON KATHLEEN AND BACK ON TOM AS YOUNG KATHLEEN MOVES HER CHAIR TO FACE TOM.

YOUNG K Sometimes Tom, I have to nip myself to make sure this isn't just a dream; I cannot believe it's become a reality. We are nearly there Tom, aren't we?

TOM (Looking into young Kathleen's eyes) It was never only a dream Kathleen. But sometimes the weight of responsibility is so great, when things looked as though they were all coming together, and then falling apart again; before Bulmer did what he did. (Smiling) When Sean came, when he brought Pearse and then Connolly, even the Countess and Casement, McGarry and Blytle and the little Captain..... Mellows. We know them all dear.....most entered into our lives through that door. That door has

been like a gateway to the path of freedom for them and us.....they have all found what they were looking for here in this shop. Any man or woman searching for hope surely found it and more here in this shop. When they entered (points to door) that door and heard that bell ring.....(bell rings) that bell announces that they've arrived home in a sense, home being where all kindred spirits meet and speak the same language. Our hope has become a living reality here in this shop, for we planned and schemed and brought to life the burning flame that scorched souls and made hearts brave and took fear from trembling hands. We've made a reality in this room where men and women can cast of their doubts and arm themselves with the hope they find here. It's the kind of hope that unites all men and women who are involved in the freeing of their country from a tyrant oppressor. Soon we will be free, Kathleen.....

LIGHTS OF TOM AND BACK ONTO KATHLEEN

KATHLEEN Another wonderful fellow whom I'd forgotten to my shame Tom was Thomas O'Connor.....it's being back here in our shop that brings it all back to me.....to my heart (pause) a great young fellow he was....dead 11 years now.....you called him Tommy but I always called him the name given to him by his mother...all those tobacco deliveries, it amounted to thousands of American dollars, I should know dear because it was I who counted the money every time he walked in through that door straight of the ship..... I still have that little cash book, it's well hidden in Liverpool, I'll take it out some day if ever I decide to write my memoirs. (Pausing) Thomas always walked in happy. Remember?

LIGHTS OF KATHLEEN AND BACK ON TOM

TOM (To young Kathleen picking up a tobacco box from under his chair) Kathleen, this is the final delivery from America. Every time Tommy walks through that door with the tobacco deliveries from America my heart races because it means that the day is so near, nearer than the last time when young Tommy was here, isn't he such a cheerful fellow? He missed your cup of tea today but told me to give you his regards Kathleen for we may not see him again. His work is finished.

YOUNG K Remember the day Pearse walked in and Thomas was so gotten by him he dropped the cup of tea and it smashed it on the floor. (Smiling)

Pearse doesn't realise the effect he has on people; some people are in awe of him.... if they didn't know him! I hope we can meet with Thomas again; somewhere, some day.....!

LIGHTS OF TOM AND BACK ON KATHLEEN

KATHLEEN I can understand now why some people felt nervous around Pearse, it was because he was different..... he seemed a bit aloof but then maybe it was just the shyness; that was definitely not the case with Markievicz.....no, she was not a shy personand she liked to think people were in awe of her.....but not I..... indeed when we were prisoners together with Madame McBride in Holloway, oh we got on fine..... that is if I didn't pay too much heed of the things she said..... she tried to talk down to me but I soon gave her a lesson on equality. It was quiet unbearable when she came to stay, invited herself, I might add to Richmond Avenue when I was in hospital and the cheek of her, because I'd already agreed to look after some of her furniture when we were in Holloway together because Mrs Ginnell whom she had shared a house with was giving the house up and Markievicz didn't know anyone else with as large a house as ours Tom.....so I agreed to allow her to store her things but only until she found an alternative which I thought wouldn't take all that long.....she had plenty of contacts.....my God if I could have got out of that bed and beat her over the head with the bed pan I would have Tom.....really. (Smiling) But this is silly women's talk.....after all Markievicz and I were comrades in arms.....each playing our own part.....the woman has my greatest admiration forever. I'll never forget her speech in the Dail when she addressed Collins and the rest of them directly.....she never sounded more glorious than she sounded on that day in January 1922.

LIGHTS DIM: COUNTESS MARKIEVICZ SPEAKING AT THE DAIL KATHLEEN SITS ON STOOL AND REMEMBERS

V/O Why didn't you send me? I tell you, don't trust the English with gifts in their hands. That's not original, someone said it before of the Greeks—but it is true. The English come to you to-day offering you great gifts; I tell you this, those gifts are not genuine. I tell you, you will come out of this a defeated nation. No one ever got the benefits of the promises the English

made them. It seems absurd to talk to the Irish people about trusting the English, but you know how the O'Neill's and the O'Donnell's went over and always came back with the promises and guarantees that their lands would be left them and that their religion would not be touched. What is England's record? It was self aggrandisement and Empire. You will notice how does she work—by a change of names. They subjugated Wales by giving them a Prince of Wales, and now they want to subjugate Ireland by a Free State Parliament and a Governor General at the head of it. I could tell you something about Governor-Generals and people of that sort. You can't have a Governor-General without the Union Jack, and a suite, and general household and other sort of official running in a large way. The interests of England are the interests of the capitalistic class. Your Governor-General is the centre for your Southern Unionists, for whom Mr. Griffith has been so obliging. He is the centre from which the anti-Irish ideals will go through Ireland, and English ideals will come: love of luxury, love of wealth, love of competition, trample on your neighbours to get to the top, immorality and divorce laws of the English nation. All these things you will find centred in this Governor-General. I heard there was a suggestion—there was a brother of the King's or the Queen's suggested as Governor-General, and I heard also that this Lascelles was going to be Governor. I also heard that there is a suggestion that Princess Mary's wedding is to be broken off, and that the Princess Mary is to be married to Michael Collins who will be appointed first Governor of our Saorstát na hEirennn. All these are mere nonsense. You will find that the English people, the rank and file of the common people will all take it that we are entering their Empire and that we are going to help them. All the people who are in favour of it here claim it to be a step towards Irish freedom, claim it to be nothing but allegiance to the Free State. Now what will the world think of it? What the world thinks of it is this: Ireland has long been held up to the scorn of the world through the British Press. According to that Press Ireland is a nation that lay down, that never protested. The people in other countries have scorned us. So Ireland can bear to be scorned again, even if she takes the oath that pledges her support to the Commonwealth of Nations. But I say, what do Irishmen think in their own hearts? Can any Irishman take that oath honourably and then go back and prepare to fight for an Irish Republic or even to work for the Republic? It is

like a person going to get married plotting a divorce. I would make a Treaty with England once Ireland was free, and I would stand with President de Valera in this, that if Ireland were a free Republic I would welcome the King of England over here on a visit. But while Ireland is not free I remain a rebel unconverted and unconvertible. There is no word strong enough for it. I am pledged as a rebel, an unconvertible rebel, because I am pledged to the one thing—a free and independent Republic.

KATHLEEN She spoke of the top of her head without notes.....I admired Madam more than I ever admitted. She once or twice told me I was a darling which I resented but (in a girlish tone) in a strange way I thought of her at times as a little darling and you know Tom I'm not given to that sort of sentimentality in the slightest! And.....I sincerely hope that the Dublin City Council isn't inclined to sentimentality when it comes to replacing that monstrosity.....Nelson's Pillar that over shadowed our shop. Yes, it's good news Tom, at last someone had the good sense to get rid of it and I hope whoever it was remains forever free of capture.....but really they deserve a medal; I think it was someone's way of saying to you all Tom, 'we haven't forgotten you at all.....not after 50 years.....and we still won't..... even after 100 years.....(Deep sigh) A Light House they should have honoured with your name Tom.....not a block of flats.....I'll rest her for a while before I go back out through that door that I came and went from so many times with so many stories that must be left untold Tom.....let me close my eyes for a while with you.....

LIGHTS OUT: END OF ACT 1

ACT 2

SCENE 1

AS LIGHTS GO UP KATHLEEN IS STARTLED FROM SLEEP BY CROWD PASSING OUTSIDE SINGING 'BOLD FENIAN MEN' SHE GETS OF STOOL AND WALKS ABOUT SHOP

KATHLEEN My God....Tom, I thought this was all a dream and that you were still here and I brought you the news that they'd hanged Casement and before they put the rope around his neck I heard him say again those sincere words he spoke to you and I in this very shop.....

V/O Self-government is our right, a thing born in us at birth, a thing no more to be doled out to us or with-held from us by another people, than the right to life itself.

KATHLEEN And now, again, this is my reality, the empty shop that was the heartbeat, the pulse of republicanism in all of Ireland. So much has happened Tom in these last 50 years.....but I know that you know it all... it was really I who died and you who lived.....all decisions, I made on the premise, 'what would Tom do' to speak out or not was always decided by what I knew you would have wanted me to do.....I kept you here (holds out her hand) at my side always and that was the only comfort I had. Yes, off course our three boy meant everything to me and we were always close and they never forgot you Tom not for one single day. (Pauses fixes dead flowers on counter then change of tone) Dev took MacNeill back into the fold.....and all the other prisoners were advised to except him and to try and understand how it was for him, as if he were the wronged and not the wrong doer! I could never forgive such treachery..... and Hobson.....(says with resentment) neither of them lifted a stick that Easter Monday.....they could have joined what they started but they refused.....

KATHLEEN MOVES TO BACK OF SHOP THEN MacNEILL AND HOBSON ENTER AND STAND WHERE KATHLEEN STOOD AT COUNTER

MacNEILL You may help me word this and I'll have it send it immediately to every company in the country!

HOBSON Yes yes but don't you think you should speak to the leadership first!

MacNEILL (Sarcastically) And tell them that I'm dismissing them all or what?

HOBSON Should you (realising his mistake in choice of words) I mean we not seek a meeting with the full leadership.....including Clarke?

MacNEILL (Shouting) I am the leadership.....has every one forgot who I am, I am the leader of this organisation.....and don't you forget it either!

HOBSON Well, let us not fall out about it (in a hurt tone and quick pace) but don't you forget who I am either.....I didn't spend all those years building up and organising, pulling people together, striving for harmony

where there was division.....moving here to Dublin from my home in Belfast to help build this movement of resistance to free our country.....I left behind friends and family because of it.....I had a good life in Belfast and here in Dublin I did all things with a honest heart and always for the right reason.....(slowly and thoughtfully) or at the time I thought the reason was right; I even gave up my religion to facilitate my republican activities and I did not commit one single action for my own gain politically or otherwise.....and if I die tomorrow I die with a clear conscience; I've already lost the best friend any man could possibly have had in Tom Clarke and I cannot go through that grief that pain of loss a second time!

MacNEILL I've no intentions of going to Clarke or anyone, they can read like everyone else.....they didn't consult me about the rising and I'm not giving them the respect that they didn't see fit to give to me! Read over this before I send the couriers out.

HOBSON (Aloud) "Volunteers completely deceived. All orders for special action are hereby cancelled, and on no account will action be taken" that's fine it should do the trick.....

MacNEILL I'll meet you early in the morning at headquarters in Dawson street. (Deep loud sigh)

LIGHTS DIM ON MacNEILL AND HOBSON THEN LIGHTS
UP ON KATHLEEN

KATHLEEN Maybe I'm not remembering it all as it was exactly Tom, but the end result of MacNeill's treachery can't be contested. (Pause) Sean had Hobson held prisoner, and rightly so, until that Monday evening, so his influence over MacNeill could do no more damage than it had done in the past.....isn't that right Tom?.....and Ireland heard little of him after that though I believe when the men released him they told him he deserved to be with you all in the GPO.....but he declined the invitation preferring to walk away! But his absence didn't deter MacNeill one bit.....he did the most despicable thing a man to do to another.....he betrayed you Tom, he betrayed all of us.....and as it turned out MacNeill was master of his own treacherous ways; his treachery needed no encouragement! He cycled himself down on the Saturday evening to the Sunday Independent to place his countermanding orders in the paper for the next day. (Reads aloud from

newspaper on counter) and here it is in front of me: (holds newspaper in hand and reads aloud) 22nd April 1916. Owing to the very critical position, all orders given to Irish Volunteers for tomorrow, Easter Sunday, are hereby rescinded, and no parades, marches, or other movements of Irish Volunteers will take place. Each individual volunteer will obey this order strictly in every particular. (Signed) Eoin MacNeill, Chief of Staff, Irish Volunteers. Such treachery Tom; win or lose Tom.... it was still treachery.....

LIGHTS OUT ON KATHLEEN AND ON TOM AND YOUNG KATHLEEN

TOM It's just a niggling worry I have Kathleen about MacNeill, something Sean said about no longer trusting him to tow the line when things take off for real.....

YOUNGK What did Sean say exactly?

TOM He reminded me that MacNeill had stated that he would only be in favour of participating in a rising if the lives and liberty of the Volunteers were in imminent danger. So the question is can we trust him.....and I fear we cannot!

KATHLEEN MASSAGES TOMS SHOULDERS

YOUNGK You must deal with it now dear rather than be confronted with the outcome when it happens.....by the way Sean met a promising young fellow in Cork last week, he was talking to MacSwiney and MacCurtain when he met him, he was back home from working in London; Michael Collins is his name, Sean says he's got the gift of the gab.....

TOM TAKES KATHLEEN'S HAND AND KISSES IT, LIGHTS DIM, THEN FULL BACK ON KATHLEEN PRESENT.

KATHLEEN (Thoughtful) Sean had great insight.....I came to like Collins, he was a brave soldier and a great worker..... I saw that first hand when he was appointed to help raise funds for the prisoner's dependants after the rising. He should never have gone to London, he should have refused, he should never have been asked. Dev should have had the guts to go but he hadn't.....he showed such weakness in not taking responsibility.....Michael Collins was a soldier not a politician

and I told him so to his face.....if he'd agreed to let the British keep Counties Cork and Limerick from the province of Munster it would have brought it home a lot sooner to them all how those 6 counties of Ulster feel with only Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan being freed. We should have supported our fellow country men and women from the North instead of turning our back on them and critising them for doing exactly what we did ourselves here; in fact we did a lot worse then than they have now in the fight for freedom.....yes, we've turned our backs on them all and that is worse than anything.....my God what has this country become Tom.....what? We cannot just walk away from the mess the treaty created for our fellow country men and women in the North; was that really our legacy to them?.....No no it can't be and it shouldn't be. We can't expect them to sort it all out on their own and then blame them when they try....condemn them when they fail.....and judge them as we were judged with an enemy's eye! (Sounding distraught) I can hear Collins now.....how sweet it was.....to hear his voice.....then.....and even now.....I would listen to him speak if he could.....though I did not agree with him concerning the treaty.....and I pity him.....still!

KATHLEEN SITS AND FIDDLES WITH THE DEAD FLOWERS ON COUNTER AS COLLINS' V/O IS HEARD SHE DOESN'T RAISE HER HEAD

V/O "If the impossible had happened, and the Rising had succeeded, and the English had surrendered and evacuated the country, we would then have been free, and we could then have adopted the republican form of government, or any other form we wished. But the Rising did not succeed as a military venture. And if it had succeeded it would have been the surrender and the evacuation which would have been the proof of our success, not the same for, nor the form of, the government we would have chosen. If we had still a descendant of our Irish Kings left, we would be as free, under a limited monarchy, with the British gone, as under a Republic. The form of our government is our domestic Irish concern. It does not affect the fact of our national freedom. Our national freedom depends upon the extent to which we reverse the history of the last 700 years, the extent to which we get rid of the enemy and get of his control over our material and spiritual life".

KATHLEEN TAKES A DEEP SIGH AND LOOKS UP AS HER VOICE OVER IS HEARD

V/O May 15th 1952. To the Editor, "Sunday Independent" Sir – A letter appeared in the "Sunday Press" of May 11 from Earnest Aherne in reference to the time of the Anglo-Irish Treaty negotiations, in which he stated that: "Mr. de Valera did not refuse to go to London." This is historically inaccurate. I was present at the meeting of An Dail held in the Oak Room of the Mansion House when the question was under discussion. I heard Mr. de Valera refusing to go. There was general dissatisfaction at his refusal, but since at the time we all trusted him, we allowed him to talk us into agreement. But in the light of his subsequent actions I have come to interpret his refusal in a very different way to what I did then. Signed Kathleen Clarke 40 Merlyn Rd., Ballsbridge Dublin.

KATHLEEN GET UP FROM SEAT AND PUTS ON HER COAT

KATHLEEN And now Tom, once again, it is I who walks out the door. Should we say those words that were on our lips as we embraced in that dreadful cell a few short hours before you faced your executioners; or should they be left unspoken.....sometimes the unspoken words are the most important and powerful for we never know what they may have influenced. We left so many things unsaid, and sometimes I argue with myself that maybe I should have told you that last time how much I loved you and how I didn't know what I would ever do without you.....I didn't wish to burden more than you were already.....but perhaps it may have helped you.....

LIGHTS DIM ON KATHLEEN AND ON FULL OVER TOM AND YOUNG KATHLEEN WHO ARE STANDING IN CELL HOLDING HANDS

YOUNGK And Tom what about Sean, dear Sean? They say he was taken with Connolly.....have you any knowledge of where they might be?

TOM I know only that Connolly is in hospital and Sean was brought in the van with him. So maybe there is still hope for them both.....Some of the men don't think they'll be shot, but I don't believe that there is kindness or compassion in our enemy. Why would they spare two cripples? Sean and Connolly's legs may be crippled but the British mind set is crippled and they can't think or see beyond military victory.....

KATHLEEN (no lights) We should have danced one last time Tom..... and perhaps I should have told you my other news; but once the hand is placed on the plough there is no looking back.....

YOUNGK Let's dance together as though we have not got a care in the world.....

LOOKING INTO ONE ANOTHER'S EYES KATHLEEN PUTS TOM'S HAND ON HER STOMACH INDICATING SHE'S PREGNANT THEY SMILE THEN WALTZ TO "I'LL TAKE YOU HOME AGAIN KATHLEEN" WHEN DANCE ENDS LIGHTS OUT ON TOM AND YOUNG KATHLEEN.

LIGHTS STILL DIM ON KATHLEEN AS SHE WALKS OUT OF SHOP. SHE STOPS AT DOOR AND LISTENS AS 16 SHOTS ARE FIRED IN A WHISPERED VOICE/OVER CALLING OUT THE NAMES BEFORE EACH SHOT IS FIRED OF THE 16 EXECUTED LEADERS OF THE EASTER RISING INCLUDING CASEMENT. (HE WAS HANGED)

V/O (Padraic Pearse: Thomas McDonagh, Tom Clarke, Joseph Mary Plunkett, Willie Pearse, Michael O'Hanrahan, Edward Daly, John McBride, Eamonn Ceannt, Con Colbert, Sean Houston, Michael Mallin, Tomas Kent, James Connolly, Sean MacDiarmada and Roger Casement was hanged. KATHLEEN We know their dream, enough to know they dreamed and are dead. (W.B.Yeates)

HOLDS HER HEAD HIGH AND WALKS THROUGH THE AISLE IN AUDIENCE.

ENDS

by

Roseleen Walsh©1st January 2016

THIS ONE ACT PLAY TAKES PLACE IN BELFAST 1943 IN THE KITCHEN OF WINNIE AND GEORGE MCBRIDE'S HOUSE AT THE FOOT OF THE CAVE HILL IN BELFAST. SIRENES RING LOUDLY AND THERE IS A SENSE THAT THEIR HOUSE MIGHT BE HIT BY ONE OF HITLERS BOMBS. A POT OF TEA IS BOILING ON THE STOVE GEORGE IS LYING ON THE FLOOR. THE SIRENE STOPS AND AS GEORGE GETS UP OF FLOOR WINNIE ENTERS WEARING A DRESSING GOWN AND HOLDING WATER BOTTLE, SHE HANDS IT TO HIM BEFORE SITTING DOWN, HE TAKES IT AND SETS IT OVER ON SINK.

WINNIE It's freezing upstairs, boil the water and fill the bottle up again till I get some heat into me. Oh very nice you've made tea!

GEORGE Drink it now while it's still warm.....I lay on the floor when the sirens went off so it may be a bit stewed.....but what off it.....what's stewed tea between a man and his wife? (looks for a response but there is none) There's more between us as man and wife than in that tay pot, we can face anything as long as we're together.....I'm right there Winnie.....(still no response) aren't I? (still no response)

HE POURS OUT THE TEA AND THEY BOTH DRINK. WINNIE MAKES A FACE AND SETS CUP DOWN.

WINNIE I hate stewed tea and I can't drink my tea without sugar..... stewed tea reminds me of the G.P.O. it took me two days to swallow it..... (sighs) but when there's nothing else.... what else do you do but grin and bear it! I swore afterwards I'd never drink stewed tea again, ever!

GEORGE I know all about that Winnie dear.....at least you'd the comfort of having a roof over your head in the G.P.O.....in the trenches we'd nothing.....there was no such thing as warm tea or warm anything.....Oh don't start me.....I still try to forget about it; (pause) anyway, we've run out of sugar and we haven't a shilling to put in the gas either.....(Winnie stares at him) What do you want me to do run down to the shop.....and get blew up and leave you to wash the dishes all by yourself.....(they both laugh)

WINNIE Never one to let a joke pass you! You see the funny side in everything George.....(jokingly) you'll miss me.....there's no one else to appreciate your sense of humour.....is there now.

GEORGE You've had a bad few days Winnie and there's nothing I can do for you to make it better.....(no response, pause then he puts his hand on hers) try and drink it Winnie, it'll warm you up a bit, (feeling her hands) you're cold.....your hands are like ice!

SHE DRINKS TEA

CONTINUE:

You'll never believe what I came across this afternoon in the attic.....

WINNIE What were you doing in the attic? I thought I was dreaming then when I realise I wasn't I thought it was rats moving about, your big noisy feet George you'd wake a nation up!

GEORGE (Hands her a Christmas card) Look, look at who it's from.....

WINNIE My God.....Liam Tumilson and I was thinking about him the other night.... In '33 he was so brave to carry the Shankill Road James Connolly banner at Bodenstown.....Straney carried it with him, I was hurt and offended at what happened but the directive was no banners that year.....so they should have obeyed orders.....though some thought the truth was more like a fear of a Communist infiltration of the I.R.A. that republicans had at that time... the Tipperary men in particular.....what Christmas did we get this?

GEORGE I thought he was brave to insist he be called Liam instead of Billy when he still lived in Thorndyke St over in East of the City.....well brave or foolish..... it got him into a lot of trouble from time to time though he faced it down well. He sent us the card 1935, that was the Christmas before he left for Spain. 'Even the Olives are bleeding' who was it that said that?

WINNIE Donnelly.... I forget the first name.... he was from Dungannon I'm sure!

GEORGE You're right, he was also a poet.....

WINNIE (Reading card) 'No Surrender' Liam loved that quote from Cathal Brugha.....and he did well defending Connolly House in '33..... the Catholic Church fired the anti-communist fears from their pulpits.....and poor Straney he was killed soon after Liam..a matter of months really.

GEORGE (The mood turns very sombre) Yeah and Bill Beattie from Wilton Street, we were in the trenches together, Bill became a fine socialist he was afraid of nothing either. You're afraid of nothing Winnie Carney.....are you? Were you ever afraid Winnie.....ever?

WINNIE No George.....I never had the sense to be afraid.....never!

It was working for James that gave me the confidence to be myself and to value what I had to contribute to society; listening to James or even his Nora instilled and awakened a sense of being of value. They talked the talk all

right but they walked the walk and took passengers.....and in the beginning I was only a passenger but by 1916 I was an experienced driver; directing some of the passengers to their seats and I watched them exit.....all too soon! And now it's I who will be exiting.....too soon, there is so much more I wanted to do for.....(looks at him and sighs)

GEORGE For the cause or is it just for Connolly.....a Connolly thing perhaps? Go on Winnie, say it now, for we will never have this conversation again.....will we?

WINNIE I suppose not.

GEORGE We could never have lasted all these years if we had 'The Conversation'.....our lives just crashed into one another like an explosion felling all the pieces of a building back together in another separate place far far away from where it once stood.....we were so alike...when we were young.....we were lit by that unseen torch, the flame of which burned us up, moulded, melted us into becoming a burning part of it that flickered and flickered and could never be put out.....not by events not by anyone.....it smouldered and still it smoulders though at a slower pace now!

WINNIE You just reminded me why I fell in love with you.....sometimes you know I forget and it seems as if it was never there and then you talk to me like that and I remember.....I remember why I fell in love with a man called George McBride.....do you still remember why you fell in love with me? (Looking at each other) I need to hear it George, I need to hear you tell me all over again.....(in a whisper) now, so I can put the words back inside my heart and carry them with me when I go.....tell me like you did the first time but without the embarrassment.

GEORGE I only wish you could take me with you.....Winnie! I'm not prepared for losing you.....life will go on I know, but my life will stop.....it will never be the same but at least I had you.....we had each other.....and it was so good.....and it is still so good except I can't stand watching you in all this pain dear.....love seems out of step just watching you like this.....

WINNIE Go on say it – tell me now!

GEORGE (Hesitates closes eyes and squeezes her hands) I love the smell of you Winnie, I love the taste of you Winnie McBride; I love the joy, the laughter, the tears and the pain you brought me Winnie McBride and the truth.....the truth was always by far the most beautiful part of you Winnie – it was your greatest gift to me.....I love all of you – even in your sickness, in your silence, in your loneliness, yes, loneliness Winnie, I know you missed your family – you gave everything you cared about up for me – I only hope I've been worthy of you.....(long silence between them both)

WINNIE Oh shut up George, you're depressing me.....but thank you my love, thank you.....a dying woman needs to be surrounded by beautiful words and a language only lovers understand and you have given me all these things and more.....you brought me hope not gloom! (Pause) You know George when I stayed on in the GPO with James, I held his hand just like you're holding mine now, and I wiped his brow and I promised him I wouldn't leave him on his own to face the enemy.....what the enemy would do to him I'd no idea, you know they may have finished him off there on that floor, and me as well I supposed, but it didn't matter then because I just didn't care I was there for a purpose and I intended to fulfil that purpose to the very end, even if it meant my own end.....can you understand that George? I knew in my heart that it was all worth it.....whatever was going to happen.... it was all worth it.....

GEORGE Maybe you loved him Winnie because that's just how I feel now about you, if one of these German bombs drop and is a direct hit on this house there is no way I would attempt to save myself and leave you here on your own to die.....no way; I'm here with you to the end Winnie; this is my GPO and I'm not afraid as long as we can take our last breath together!

WINNIE (Softly) I didn't love James in the way you mean dear, because you love me you can't walk away, but with James Connolly I more than loved him, I was told to leave, I could have walked away if I'd wanted to but the fact is I agreed with everything he said and did..... it was like part of me was in some way a part of him and his philosophy...his philosophy was a real living way of life.....if you can understand that. He didn't just say things he was true to it all. It really felt like, that, I was his right hand or something like that..... so close.....I became a part of his

whole vision.....he raised me to a higher level of understanding and insight into what became the world I lived in..... through him.....through James!

GEORGE So you're saying that what I loved in you was what you became because of James Connolly.....

WINNIE I can't deny that through James I viewed the world in a different light than before I knew him.....when I got the word to go meet him in Dublin and to bring my type writer I knew that was the call I'd been waiting for all my whole life.....and I had no..... absolutely no reservation about going, I knew exactly what that call would ultimately involve.....giving my life if that's what it took and I went like a willing slave.....what a contradiction George.....a willing slave..... James would disapprove of that analogy for certain.....

GEORGE (Takes both her hands across the table) I'm your willing slave Winnie.....do you accept my analogy?

WINNIE At this moment dear, I accept any explanation you give me..... (softly) about anything!

GEORGE What about my truth my declaration of love for you Winnie, do you accept that..... my lovely lovely Winnie?

WINNIE (Smiling puts her head down) There was James.....and then there was you.....George.....I loved.....love you my dearest man. You are the love of my life. What would I have become without you all these years. Yes, from a distance it seemed I had a full life but I was lonely and nothing could ever take away that loneliness.....(in a whisper) except what you brought into my life! I recognised your soul and mine were both much the same the first time we met.....I know you did also.....am I right?

GEORGE I wasn't searching consciously but something clicked something happened.....something was born inside me something came to life.....something I didn't know existed.....it was love Winnie, it was love! That first sight of you... though.... we didn't speak, we didn't exchange a single word but a chapter opened and together we've worded every single page since together.....ever since that first meeting and even yet.....

now..... the chapter has more to tell; but only to your heart and mine!
We've never needed words much Winnie.....have we?

WINNIE No.....you're right George words were a bother they kinda got in the way.....the way of..... the way we were!

GEORGE A glance.....sometimes....most times a sharp one at that would convey a thousand words from you Winnie.....and sometimes a touch.....a squeeze of the hand or your lovely fingers with their hardened tips on my shoulder as I'd write late at night.....

WINNIE That was my favourite time of day.....late at night when it would seem that there were only you and I in the whole world awake.....it often took me back to the GPO when I sat with James.....there were others.....everyone everywhere all over the place but it was the quiet moments with James as he lay on the floor wounded that I recall most.....it was I felt.....our time....it seemed to me that this was what God had called me for.....he had brought me into the life of James Connolly to sit with him and comfort him in this his hour of need his hour of helplessness and perhaps despair.....I was with him because his beloved Lily could not be.....and she was grateful for my service to him and she told me so.....after they killed him. He knew before we marched from Liberty Hall on Easter Monday that he would die.....one way or the other.....but two things he had not imagined where.....

AIRCRAFT BUZZING OVERHEAD AND LOUD EXPLOSIONS THEY HOLD HANDS ACROSS TABLE AND LOOK INTO ONE ANOTHERS EYES.
GEORGE SPEAKS IN VOICE OVER.

V/O Dear God whom I don't believe in let us go now for I cannot bear the thought of going on without Winnie. She is mine and the love of my life she is all I care for and about..... there is nothing in this world for me if we are not together on this earth or in eternity which I don't believe in either.....Winnie let us go now together at this exact moment. Now Winnie now.

SILENCE IS BROKEN WHEN SIREN SOUNDS.

GEORGE That sounded like the Cavehill Winnie, hope Napoléon's nose isn't broken or McArt's Fort destroyed, you'd never forgive the Germans for that would you dear?

WINNIE (Smiling) I never forgave the British for destroying Sackville Street? James could not believe it when the bombardment began he honestly thought they would do nothing to ruin what they classed as their own..... and he was wrong.....even James got that wrong and I was surprised because he got nothing else wrong about that week and the aftermath.....he read people so well (smiles) it seemed as though he could read men's souls and their hearts. He knew me well.... and at times I feared..... better than I knew myself....

GEORGE I wish I could boast that I knew you better than Connolly ever did but Winnie I only know what you choose to share with me and that's never been enough.....never! I shared with you how I felt seeing men die in the trenches how my guts wrenched afterward and I could not clear those scenes from my mind.....I shared the most intimated of my thoughts with you, thoughts that I could never bring myself to utter to another human being.....how intimate was that Winnie?

WINNIE You share my bed George is that not more intimate than any other thought or act? No other man ever came even close to that!.....I didn't choose to exclude you.....but I keep my word to the living and the dead. I took an oath of secrecy and I've remained true to that oath.....You would not want me to break it because you understand how sacred that oath is.....I know you well enough George to know you would not have respected me for breaking my word.....would you?

GEORGE You know me like no other.....but what if.....what if that bomb had been a direct hit on this house.....

WINNIE CUTS IN SHARPLY BEFORE HE FINISHES SENTENCE

WINNIE What if I'd died in the GPO (raises voice)

GEORGE Exactly.....I'd never have known you or anything about you but you didn't die there you lived on Winnie and now is the time before it's too late to tell me about that week in your life.....for me Winnie.....I won't tell (laughs) honest to God.....

WINNIE You don't even believe in a god never mind in God! Look (softly) what is it you need to know George?

GEORGE I want to know.....I need to know.....what it was like for you that week.....that's all.....just that!

WINNIE But why George? Why now? Last week last month last year might have been too late.....what is it in you now at this time of our life that makes you want to know about that week.....why never before?

GEORGE LETS GO OF WINNIES HAND AND STANDS UP HE MOVES TO FRONT OF STAGE CLOSES EYES AND BEGINS:

GEORGE No one ever loved me Winnie the way you have loved me..... no one ever made me feel the way you make me feel.....(turns his head to her) no one ever gave up so much for me than you did Winnie. (turns his head back to audience) But I need to remember every strand of thought, every step, every single imprint, every tear, every moment of grief that led you back home to Belfast and to me.....Yes I don't believe in God.....but I do believe that there was something.....something that I can't explain that led you to me and me to the greatest love affair that I could never have imagined possible in my life.....the life of George Mc Bride.....I would be nothing if not for you Winnie.

WINNIE With or without me George you would have been someone to someone.....you were always someone George!

GEORGE You joined Cumman na mBan out of a commitment you believed in.....yes Winnie you and the Connolly girls you organised it all in Belfast because... you really did believe and you'd thought it through to the obvious outcome.....but I....(lifts his mug of tea and stands at edge of stage) I joined the UVF for the sake of it.....for I was a young lad prone to the terrible disease of boredom! In those days the Shankill held nothing for kids like me or the gangs I knocked about with. Our da's stood about street corners with nothing but hope in their trouser pockets.....hope that came to nothing.....untill the war came that was.....then they had a purpose....fighting the enemy.....though they didn't know who exactly the enemy was outside of here.....until then the enemy was always the pope heads..(laughs sarcastically) the empire had us summed up rightly for

we had nothing nothing at all; we were like sheep..... they lead and we followed.....we didn't have a say and even if we had we wouldn't have known how to say it.....that's what imperialism does to the masses.....that's what its designed to do.....keep us quiet!

WINNIE James knew all about that dear he learned a lot when he was in the British Army for all those years in Cork.....he learned how the foot soldiers were cannon fodder for the establishment and the Land Lords and how the common people didn't matter they only mattered if they served a purpose that aided the status quo.....anywhere..... anywhere at all!

GEORGE That's how I got my rude awakening.....I was young younger than Connolly.....and I saw men die and their bodies trampled on.....I don't mean disrespectfully I only mean it happened and we couldn't help it.....none of us could.....we had to keep moving forward.....from trench to trench.....and if we survived to another trench we were lucky though it didn't seem to be the case of being lucky at the time.....to lots of us it would have been a blessing to have been cut down and to die instantly but only if death came instantly.....I saw men (stops suddenly closes his eyes and hurries back to sit by Winnie) I think something inside of me changed there in the trenches Winnie...it came to me the value of life.....I left Belfast a boy but I came back a man that's for sure.....

WINNIE I never knew that boy.....that McBride boy. Maybe I should have known him and I'd have understood him better.....what do you say about that (smiling and putting his hand to caress her cheek) young McBride.....!

GEORGE Don't tease Winnie, you know me better than I've ever known myself!

WINNIE And I've loved you better than you've ever loved yourself.....my Mr McBride! (Pause then looking into each other's eyes) I thought I'd had the most exciting adventures anyone could have had in their life and then I met you George and the adventure we shared was.....was.....it was like sometimes climbing the highest mountain and other times like diving into the deepest of oceans and finding treasure that was so precious that I

couldn't take and show to the world.....I had to keep it all to myself and let no other eyes look upon it least it would lose its spell! Its sacred spell.....and I still feel it here between us.....though I can't take it with me I have to leave it in your keeping George until we meet again.....

GEORGE You know I don't believe in all that Winnie, that afterlife stuff. (squeezes her hands tight) But if you can find a way dear I'll not be sorry if I'm wrong I'm not too proud to admit defeat! (Laughs) Now cheer up and give me memories...I want memories not promises you may not be able to keep!

SILENCE THEN BOMBING

CONTINUE:

This little scullery just now reminds me of being in the trenches... I'd hear the explosions all around.....all around.....sometimes it was hard to make out where they came from or where they landed.....but it was the fact that you knew it was all real.....all a nightmare..... and I'd want it to end and I'd wish it would one way or the other I'd wish it would do the job and I'd know nothing about it.....Winnie, I don't want to live without you I want to go with you (more bombing) if only it would take us both now this moment that is ours and ours alone.....

WINNIE (A big smile) It reminds you of the trenches George.....and funny enough.....it reminds me of the GPO.....we were hit from every direction.....above and below! (Pause) and would you believe me dear if I said I felt no fear of being killed, I'd no wish for either, not the way it was for you! I was with the most glorious of comrades.....there was: Plunkett and Pearse and Sean dear dear Sean (far away gaze) he was quite handsome you know.....

GEORGE I expect you're referring to McDermott.....fancy him did you?

WINNIE Yes dear I have no reason at this moment to deny that I did have a notion of Sean McDermott, but so did all the girls in Cumman na mBan.....he was everything that any girl could dream of.....

GEORGE Dream of what.....?

WINNIE Dream of being in his arms and being held close to his beautiful face and and I don't know just being close to him and having him to ones self! He was special.....

GEORGE So I was never the first man you loved?

WINNIE You know you were dear.....I fancied Sean I didn't love him not at that stage anyway but if he'd lived who knows.....he had sweethearts but the greatest love in his life was Ireland and Ireland only.....now back to the GPO and James.....after he was wounded there was no way I was going to leave him there....I didn't care who else was there with him it was my duty to stay to the end with him and the thought of death didn't bother me in the slightest nor could I see that it bothered anyone else either.....it was a strange feeling and it enveloped all who were there.....no one spoke of fear or defeat.....when Pearse rose and announced that we had to surrender for the sake of the rest of Dublin City our hearts fell but we knew what he was saying made the best sense.....only Tom Clarke disagreed he wanted to fight on till the end.....he could face death but not prison.....not a second time!

GEORGE (Taking a piece of paper from his pocket) I found this last night as I was changing the bed sheets.....(silence) will you read it for me?

WINNIE I'm not given to writing poetry but I've been thinking about them all since Maggie visited last week you know she was very fond of Joe McKelvey and we were reminiscing.....it was one of those 'what if' times.....crazy conversations.....Maggie got a good man.....(smiling) Oh you are definitely crazy..... off course I got a good man.....I got the best of men.....I got my George..... I got the man I loved! (Puts out hand to take paper) Give it here to me.....I just jotted the words down.....I don't know what they'll sound like out loud.....will you tell me will you tell me honestly.....imagine worrying how a poem will sound at a time like this.....can you.....just imagine? The end of my life and I'm thinking how something so minute will sound to the ears of my love.....strange isn't it?.....love I mean!

GEORGE I haven't read it.....I just glanced at it and I knew it was private....I couldn't read it without your approval.....here (hands it to her) Winnie.....read it for me.....even that is an intimacy.....you

reading your own words just for me.....I'll burn it afterwards so no other eyes or ears will ever see or hear or be touched by your lovely words.....just me.....that's a wonderful gesture dear.....for me and me alone!

WINNIE (Smiling) Me thinks you think too deeply my dear! (Opens page slowly) Promise you'll tell me the truth.....go on....promise.

GEORGE Okay! I promise.....but what if I don't like it or I don't think it's any good do you really want me to tell you the truth in that case?

WINNIE If I didn't love and respect you then the truth wouldn't count for anything (slight pause) but it matters when it matters.....lies aren't for honest people (slight pause) honesty lends a person strength to take the truth.....no matter what.....! This is so silly George and I think we are about to quarrel over this.....(they both burst out laughing)

GEORGE We'll leave the quarrel till tomorrow! We've so much to get through tonight.....so much!

OPENS PAGE AND READS IN A WHISPERED TONE

WINNIE Oh to believe again, as they believed, to be unaffected by time and trial and still believe as they believed: to march as they marched as if it were an ordinary day, while knowing it would bring them to death but still they marched on into that waiting new dawn! It waited for them and now it waits for me. How can anyone consider their enemy a friend with no bitterness to show or slow forgiveness to its end. To be at Connolly's side with pride again-Oh to believe as we all once believed-in vain!

SHE RIPS THE PAGE ONCE AND HANDS IT TO GEORGE WHO RIPS IT INTO TINY PIECES

GEORGE Now no one will ever read nor hear those words again.....no one can ever understand how you felt or what drove, wrong word, inspired you.... to put pen to paper after all this time, 27 years in fact.....where or where has all the time gone Winnie.....we have so little left.....if only Winnie if only!

WINNIE You understand then George?

GEORGE (Steps back and looks lovingly at Winnie) I understand you Winnie.....(smiles) my soul mate!

WINNIE George..... (stretches out arm for him to take her hand) My anam cara! (He takes her hand and kisses it then cries into it she speaks as he continues to cry) All my life George I've moved forward I've never missed an opportunity or regretted a single thing that I've either done or haven't done now is not a good time to stand still I must face life to the very end.....to its conclusion. I had a life and I lived it well and I'm not going to stop until it's over until the end until the final curtain.....now be brave and be happy with me.....stay in love with me after all we are lovers and soul mates, though you don't believe in the soul George but I do I still do and I find it's more gratifying to believe in more than the eye can see..... (she strokes his head and holds it to her breast)

GEORGE Sorry Winnie I didn't mean too.....

WINNIE I like you when you show your true feelings George.....this isn't a time for being brave.....it a time to be who we are.....who we are to one another!

GEORGE (Drying his eyes with handkerchief) I love you Mrs McBride.....

WINNIE My Mister Caveman! My dream come true!

MORE BOMBING IS HEARD

GEORGE I'd sing to you if I could Mrs McBride.....(teasing) you were the loveliest bride from Belfast.....the loveliest I'd ever seen in my life....and I think it would be true to say the loveliest Holyhead had ever seen either, my beautiful bride.....McBride.....

WINNIE Oh shut up George you're beginning to bore me a little.....(looking at him) just a little! Turn the wireless on and see if there is any news.

HE GOES OVER TO WIRELESS AND TURNS IT ON BUT THERE IS TOO MUCH INTERFERENCE.....HE DOESN'T TURN IT OFF.

GEORGE Blast this bloomin wireless I haven't been able to get the world service on it since 7 o'clock tonight!

WINNIE Did I ever tell you about the prisoner in the GPO?

GEORGE No.....didn't realise there were any.....

WINNIE Well.....(moving her body to get comfortable) when I entered with James and the others I set my typewriter down on the counter just behind the new brass railings and my Webley alongside it.....

GEORGE Oh your Webley, showing off now Winnie, that doesn't become you!

WINNIE It was like putting my stamp there.....they all did it.....everyone took up position in their own private space.....when all the staff and customers were ordered out and it was just us there the place took on a kind of... of work room atmosphere and in a way it felt like I'd started a new job and this counter was where I was to work from.....and I had plenty to do all week.... every other minute or it seemed like that.... Pearse or James or Plunket would be over dictating a dispatch or (takes deep breath) mobilisation order or leaflet or something, I never stopped.....(pause, faraway look).....there was a young British soldier who'd been taken prisoner and was locked inside the telephone box which stood facing me and I really did feel sorry for him, his hands were tied, Plunket lit a cigarette for him... to calm his nerves I'm sure, he must have been so frightened.....so I went over to him and gave him some of my chocolate bar which he gulped (pauses) we didn't make eye contact.....it felt strange...I always liked to look a person in the eye as you know.....and later much later while I was interned in Aylesbury I would think about everything that happened over and over analysing every minute detail and even that seemingly insignificant event..... but it niggled away at me and I came to the conclusion, as I sat in my cell knitting, yes (beaks out into a smile) knitting..... because it helps one focus, it's good for the mind and it also tires one out so you're ready for your sleep.....it was a red cardigan I knit for dear mother; it didn't fit her so she gave it to a women customer who didn't have much.....(faraway look) Oh where was I.....(indicates for him not to prompt her) yes I remember now.... we didn't make eye contact I felt, because we were both afraid in case we recognised each other as brother and sister.....part of the same human family.....and it scared me a bit because..... we can do terrible things to one another when we disconnect and it's not until afterwards that it all sinks in.....I don't mean

I have regrets, because I don't, but I do sometimes wonder.....that prisoner might have easily been you dear.....and though he was the physical representation of our enemy.....the British empire.....afterwards.....well.....somehow I realised that it didn't feel like that at the time.....he was just a boy to me, just a boy!

GEORGE This doesn't sound like you Winnie.....where has all this come from? (She doesn't acknowledge) For myself in the trenches I didn't see the Germans as the enemy.....I realised our enemy was our masters who had send us to kill and to be killed for the sake of it and to this day I can't fathom the reason.....other than greed!

WINNIE (Ignoring what he had just said) On the Monday, Easter Monday, as we lined up outside Liberty Hall I heard Markievicz shout across to James asking if I was to go with her and he shouted back "No" and it's strange now thinking about it.....for I think, what exactly did that mean, really what did it mean, it was deeper than what at first I thought.....(laughs) it sounded....lovely I thought.....you know like I belonged there with James and the rest; I belonged. It was a heavy load I carried up to the GPO, not just my typewriter but the weight also of my Webley.....together they were some weight.....I was thin then too.....skin and bones you might say.....

GEORGE A slip of a girl I think I might have said! Anyway were there no men there able to carry the typewriter for you?

WINNIE Why would I have needed a man to carry anything for me.....I carried everything that was mine myself all my life.....grief as well as joy.....even now I don't think I've burdened you George (softly) when my father left.....I burdened no one with my grief.....I don't even know if he's alive or dead.....it is of no importance now.....I can't grieve for him a second time! There have been three men who affected my life and all for different reasons.....my father, James and you.....my George....and I've loved all three in completely different ways.....but you're my last love George.....and it's you who are here with me now at the end!

GEORGE You never knit me as much as a pair of socks never mind a cardigan.....

WINNIE Knitting is for jail.....I'd always too many other things to do in the real world.....(softly) I knitted our love without using a pattern, because there was none..... and never dropped a stitch...we still wear the finished garment..... the seams all intact..... and still fit for purpose.....I knitted the front rows and you dear George you knitted the back! We both accepted that we had different things to give and we knew what we could do best in any situation.....our differences became our gift to one another to make us the best people we could be! What would I be without you George my cave man? For sure dear I would be lonely.....

GEORGE I've never cried in front of you Winnie, I'll not do it now!

WINNIE No don't but I don't mind if you do.....make sure you water the Geraniums once a week George.....(her voice is weak) preferable on a Monday.....and don't forget to feed the birds.....silly things for you to remember but..... things that kept their importance to me.....Remember me George.....won't you?

GEORGE (Voice shaking) I'm.....yours.....you are mine and.....

WINNIE BEGINS TO COUGH CONTINUOUSLY, SHE TAKES A HANKERCHIEF FROM HER POCKET AND PUTS IT OVER HER MOUTH. THE WIRELESS STARTS TO CRACKLE AGAIN THEN VERA LYNN SINGS 'YOURS' GEORGE LIFTS WINNIE IN HIS ARMS AND DANCES WITH HER.

LIGHTS OUT
END

By
Roseleen Walsh ©June 2016



Roseleen Walsh wrote her first play 'CEASE-FIRE' in 1994 in response to the IRA cease-fire announcement and hasn't stopped writing since. She has written 30 plays, monologues, poetry, prayer book-lets and one book. Here is a list of that work.

PLAYS:

CEASE-FIRE (1994) Nature or Nurture (1996) Final Encore (1996) Prelude to '81 (1998) True Confession (1999) Screw (2000) The 'D' Company Legacy (2001) The Cleaning Lady (2001) The Meeting (2005) Death of an IRA Volunteer (2006) Conspiracy is only a phone call away (2007) Rosenna's Daughters (2009) Jean Jean and the Real Jean (2010) Connolly (2011) My Son Padraig (2012) LIAM (2012) MARKIEVICZ (2012) The Two Sons: Jesus and Judas (2012) Twenty Two Good Men (2013) ULSTER BLOOD ON SPANISH FIELDS (2013) TOM (2013) Auld Mick (2013) TOM (extended version 2014) Auld Mick (2013) Divis Street Riots 1964 (2014) Two East Belfast Mothers (2014) GUARD OF HONOUR (2014) THE VIGIL (2015) A BRIEF CONVERSATION BETWEEN WINNIE CARNEY AND SIOBHÁN O'HANLON (2016) OUR OWN IRISH CULTURE (2016) THE PRICE OF AN EASTER LILY (2016) THE CLARKES:1916 (2016) Winnie & George & Their Opposing Politics (2016) Dear Niall (2016) and work in progress 'This Here Really Never Happened: Honest To God (20??)

BOOKLETS

Poems & Monologues, Sticks and Stones, A Rebel Heart (with Pol Wilson) Aiming Higher (with Michael Gallagher) Northern Rose, The Stations of the Cross from a Woman's Perspective, To Share My Faith (a little) To Love The Holy Spirit, Seek Silence in Your Soul and Hail Mary & The Two Sons.

Most of Roseleen's work can be downloaded from her web site:
www.roseleenwalsh.com

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